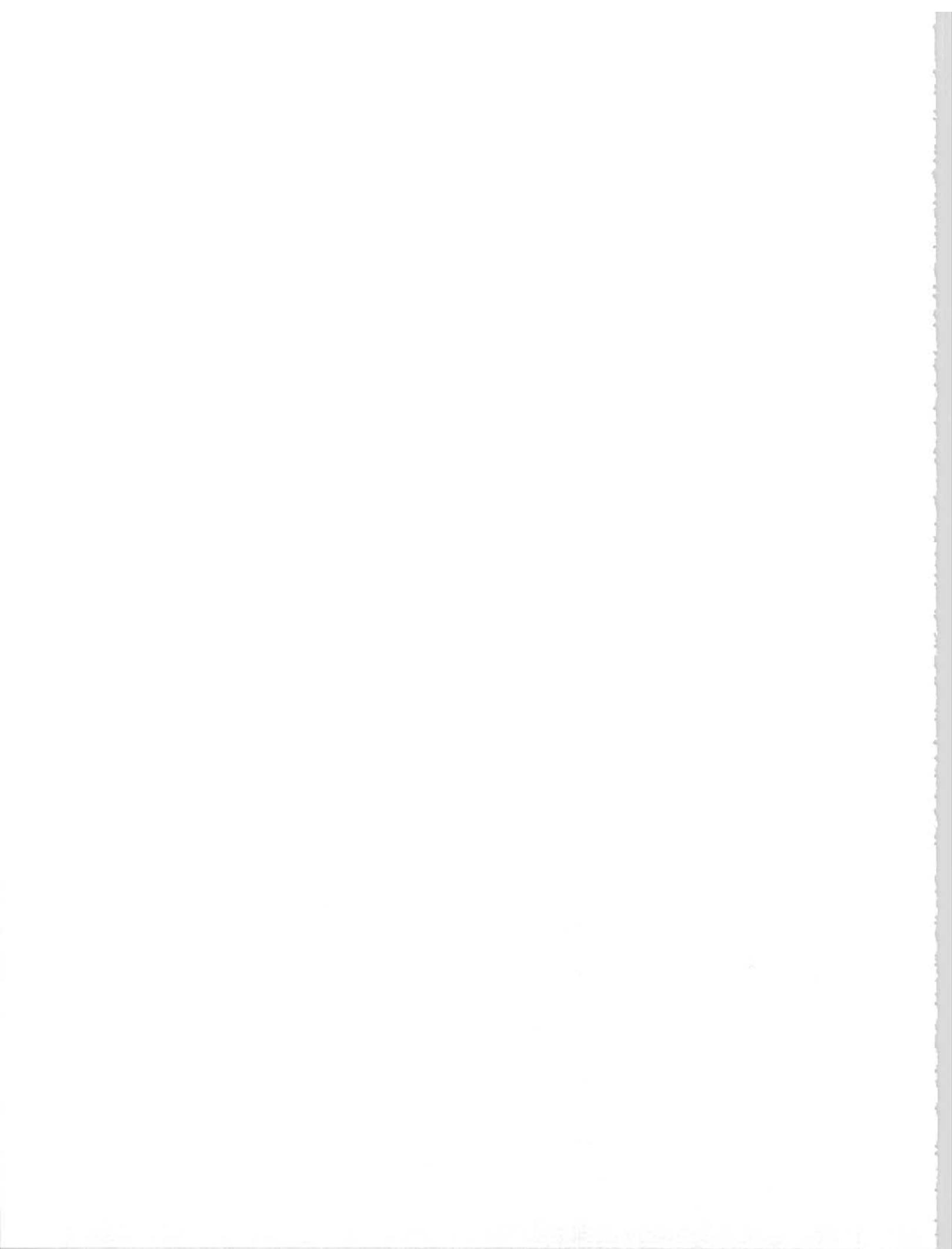


San Ysidro Mountain

CA-060-022



SAN YSIDRO MOUNTAIN WILDERNESS STUDY AREA (WSA)

(CA-060-022)

1. THE STUDY AREA --- 2,125 acres

The San Ysidro Mountain WSA is located in northeastern San Diego County, about 18 miles west of Borrego Springs and 85 miles northeast of San Diego. This 2,125-acre WSA consists entirely of public lands administered by the BLM, although it is surrounded by other ownerships (see Map 1 and Table 1).

The boundary between public lands and the Los Coyotes Indian Reservation forms the north WSA boundary. On the east, the WSA adjoins Anza-Borrego Desert State Park for three-fourths of a mile, while the south boundary conforms to the boundary between public and private lands. An indentation in the WSA's west boundary excludes Buck Canyon with its dwellings, maintained road, and patented mining claims. The remaining mile of the west boundary again borders the Los Coyotes Indian Reservation.

The study area consists of the crest and south-facing slope of San Ysidro Mountain overlooking County Highway S22 and the unincorporated community of Ranchita. Elevations in the WSA range from 3,920 to 6,020 feet. The steep, rocky slopes are covered with chaparral, which gives way to stands of pine near the summit. Ribbons of green mark the major drainages, whose relatively lush vegetation includes sycamore, willow, and other deciduous trees, with a thick understory of herbaceous plants. Although all streams are intermittent, pools of standing water may still be found in the larger ones even in late summer. From Highway S22 the WSA boundary can be reached by two improved dirt roads that follow these drainages. The road in Buck Canyon provides access to the southwest edge of the WSA, while the Cherry Canyon road meets the southeast corner.

The WSA was studied under Section 202 of the Federal Land Policy and Management Act (FLPMA). The rationale for making this small, isolated parcel of public land a wilderness study area was that Anza-Borrego Desert State Wilderness Park was studying its adjacent land for possible inclusion into the State Wilderness System. That study has been completed and the State lands are now wilderness. The WSA is within BLM's Eastern San Diego County Planning Unit, for which a management framework plan (MFP) was completed in 1981. Two suitability recommendations were analyzed in the 1980 draft Environmental Impact Statement (EIS) on Livestock Grazing and Wilderness Management of the Eastern San Diego County Planning Unit, and the final EIS on the Wilderness Recommendations for the Eastern San Diego County Planning Unit Section 202 WSAs, completed in 1988: all wilderness and no wilderness.

2. RECOMMENDATION AND RATIONALE --- 0 acres recommended for wilderness
2,125 BLM acres recommended for nonwilderness

No wilderness is the recommendation for the San Ysidro Mountain WSA. This

recommendation will be implemented in a manner which will use all practical means to avoid or minimize environmental impacts. The entire acreage in this WSA is released for uses other than wilderness, and will continue to be managed in accordance with the Eastern San Diego County Planning Unit MFP. Since this is a broad-based, general plan, not all future management actions can be predicted with certainty. Projections have been made to allow analysis of the effects of the recommendation. Although the BLM is not necessarily committed to all of these actions, the following is an outline of reasonably feasible activities which could be expected to occur. Management guidelines will be implemented using all practical means to avoid or mitigate environmental impacts.

The all-wilderness recommendation is environmentally preferable, because it would result in the least change to the existing natural environment over the long term. It is not the recommendation for this WSA, however, for the reasons described below.

Significant planned actions include possible disposal of the WSA and adjacent lands in Buck Canyon as a single parcel to Anza-Borrego Desert State Park, other State agencies, or a private party; and construction of a four-mile, nonmotorized recreational trail along the crest of San Ysidro Mountain from Buck Canyon to Cherry Canyon. Construction of the trail is contingent upon sufficient demand, with a projected time frame of the late 1990s. If the area is disposed of after trail construction, public access on the trail will be maintained as part of the disposal agreement. Fire suppression will be practiced in the WSA until a resource area fire management plan is completed in 1990. It is expected that this plan will allow the use of mechanized equipment. No new firebreaks will be constructed. No pre-suppression activities, including prescribed burning, will be allowed until after the fire management plan is completed. Further mineral exploration is expected to lead, in the mid-1990s, to two underground mining operations. These could occur in the NW quarter of Section 11 and the SW quarter of Section 2, T.11S., R.4E. Present access routes would be upgraded and approximately one mile of new access road would be developed, avoiding riparian habitat in upper Buck Canyon. Tailings would be stockpiled at the mines; total disturbed surface will be 3.2 acres for each mine. Ore will be processed elsewhere.

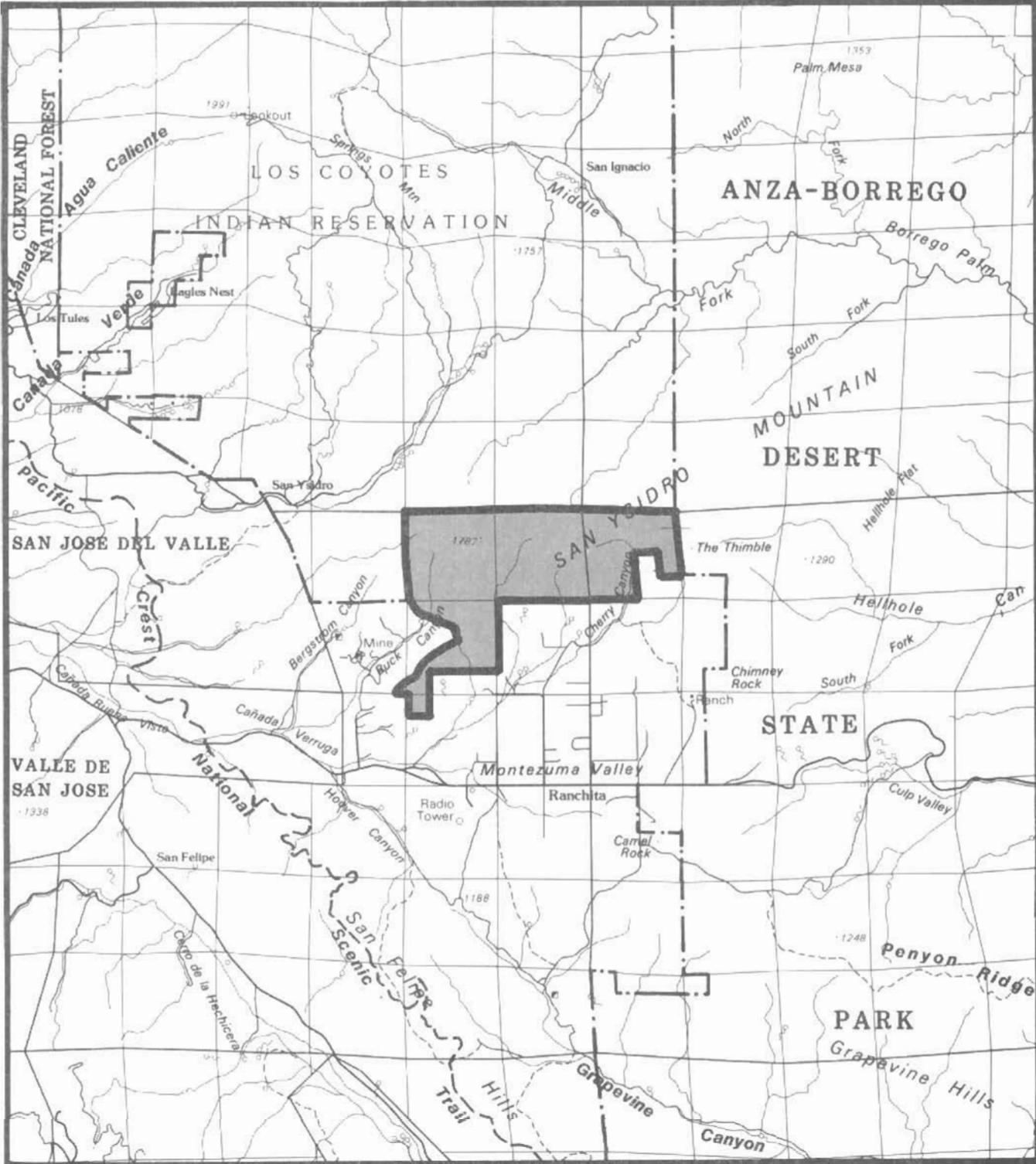
The no-wilderness recommendation is based on the following rationale: (1) the small size and configuration of the WSA make it impossible to ensure preservation of wilderness values as defined by the Wilderness Act; (2) wilderness values and other resource values can be maintained to the maximum extent possible under the management program outlined in the MFP; and (3) designation as wilderness would make exchange or disposal of the parcel impossible without Congressional action. Wilderness values in the adjacent Anza-Borrego Desert State Park Wilderness will not be impacted by this recommendation.

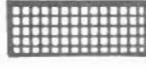
The WSA's small size, narrow, elongated shape, the fact that it is surrounded by other ownerships, and the uses on and configuration of the developed lands outside the WSA in Buck Canyon threaten the continued existence of wilderness values. Solitude is primarily affected, which in

turn interferes with the quality of the primitive recreation experience. Sights and sounds emanating from the maintained roads, residences, and mining claims in Buck Canyon already reduce the perception of solitude over approximately one-fourth of the WSA. In addition, the study area's south boundary is about five miles long, and borders private lands for its entire length. Although the private property immediately south of the WSA is essentially undeveloped, it is not likely to remain so. Future development could virtually eliminate opportunities for solitude within the WSA. There are approximately 2.5 miles of routes of travel including primitive ways, washes and other unmaintained routes of access which will remain available for vehicular use.

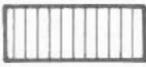
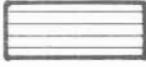
Since development of surrounding non-Federal ownerships is likely to threaten the area's wilderness values, release from wilderness consideration and resumption of planned other uses is deemed to be the realistic approach to managing San Ysidro Mountain. The management program outlined for this WSA in the Eastern San Diego County MFP is one of low-intensity.

Because the San Ysidro Mountain WSA is small and isolated, it is not well-suited for efficient management by BLM. The Eastern San Diego County MFP identified the study area for possible disposal, provided it can be exchanged as a single unit with a private party or the State for land having higher value for BLM management. The MFP recognized the area's resource values as being high enough to favor retention by a public agency. If San Ysidro Mountain WSA is designated wilderness, the goal of eventual mutually-beneficial disposal cannot be realized.

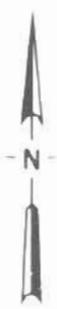


-  NONE
-  RECOMMENDED FOR NONWILDERNESS
-  LAND OUTSIDE WSA RECOMMENDED FOR WILDERNESS

- RECOMMENDED FOR WILDERNESS
- RECOMMENDED FOR NONWILDERNESS
- LAND OUTSIDE WSA RECOMMENDED FOR WILDERNESS

-  SPLIT ESTATE
-  STATE
-  PRIVATE

- SPLIT ESTATE
- STATE
- PRIVATE



**San Ysidro Mountain
Proposal
MAP-1**



060-022
JUNE, 1988

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

<u>Within Wilderness Study Area</u>		<u>Acres</u>
BLM	(surface and subsurface)	2,125
Split Estate	(BLM surface only)	0
Inholdings		
State		0
Private		0
Total		<u>2,125</u>
 <u>Within the Recommended Wilderness Boundary</u>		 <u>Acres</u>
BLM	(within WSA)	0
BLM	(outside WSA)	0
Split Estate	(within WSA)	0
Split Estate	(outside WSA)	0
Total BLM Land Recommended for Wilderness		<u>0</u>
Inholdings		
State		0
Private		0
 <u>Within the Area Not Recommended for Wilderness</u>		 <u>Acres</u>
BLM	(surface and subsurface)	2,125
Split Estate	(BLM surface only)	0
Total BLM Land Not Recommended for Wilderness		<u>2,125</u>

3. CRITERIA CONSIDERED IN DEVELOPING THE WILDERNESS RECOMMENDATIONS

A. Wilderness Characteristics

1. Naturalness: The San Ysidro Mountain WSA generally appears to have been affected by the forces of nature. Alterations to the natural landscape are limited to approximately one mile of abandoned jeep trail in Cherry Canyon, officially closed to motorized use, which leads to about six small abandoned mining prospects near the top of the ridge. Nearly the entire study area, including all the south-facing slopes and portions of the ridgetop, was burned by wildfire on July 14, 1975. Although this particular fire originated from trash burning, wildfires of natural origin are a common occurrence

in the region. Vegetative regeneration has progressed to the point where evidence of the fire is not noticeable to the casual observer.

2. Solitude: The size of the area and the uses on and configuration of the developed lands outside the WSA in Buck Canyon limit opportunities for solitude. Buck Canyon contains mining claims and associated small buildings, about nine residences, and an improved dirt road in the canyon bottom with spurs serving the various buildings. Sights and sounds emanating from this developed area reduce the perception of solitude over about one-fourth of the WSA. However, because current visitation is low, solitude can still be readily found, particularly out of Buck Canyon's immediate vicinity. The broken topography and vegetation also help screen visitors from each other.
3. Primitive and Unconfined Recreation: The area offers opportunities for hiking, nature study, and hunting for mule deer and upland game. Backpacking opportunities within the area itself are limited by its small size, but state park wilderness available for backpacking is adjacent to the east. Current recreation use is estimated at 50 to 100 visitor use days annually. Principal activities are mule deer and upland game hunting, and hiking. Target shooting, rockhounding, and informal nature study also occur.
4. Special Features: Within the WSA are two plant species which are Federal candidates for listing as threatened or endangered: Orcutt's brodiaea (Brodiaea orcuttii) and Fairchild's lily (Lilium fairchildii). No candidate wildlife species are known within the WSA. However, the loggerhead shrike, considered sensitive in Region 1 by the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, occurs here.

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 2,125 acres of the California Chaparral/California Oakwoods ecosystem. Wilderness designation of the San Ysidro Mountain WSA would not increase the ecological diversity of the NWPS. This ecosystem is currently represented by other, areas in the NWPS.

Table 2 - Ecosystem Representation

Bailey-Kuchler Classification Domain/Province/PNV	NWPS Areas		Other BLM Studies	
	areas	acres	areas	acres
<u>NATIONWIDE</u>				
California Chapparal/ California Oakwoods	4	105,301	6	37,601
<u>CALIFORNIA</u>				
California Chapparal/ California Oakwoods	4	105,301	6	37,601

2. Expanding the opportunities for solitude or primitive recreation within a days driving time (five hours) of major population centers: The WSA is within a five-hour drive of seven major population centers. Table 3 summarizes the number and acreage of wilderness areas and other BLM study areas within a five-hour drive of these population centers.

Table 3
Wilderness Opportunities for Residents
of Major Population Centers

Population Centers	NWPS areas		Other BLM Studies	
	areas	acres	areas	acres
<u>California</u>				
Anaheim-Santa Ana	25	2,823,534	153	5,703,616
Bakersfield	32	4,071,358	128	3,998,548
Los Angeles-Long Beach	27	2,876,234	135	4,958,751
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
San Diego	15	1,043,680	100	3,378,814

3. Balancing the geographic distribution of wilderness areas: The San Ysidro Mountain WSA is within 50 air miles of ten BLM WSAs recommended for wilderness designation. The closest designated wilderness is in the adjacent Anza-Borrego Desert State Park. Less than 50 air miles away are six other wilderness areas: Agua Tibia, Santa Rosa, Pine Creek, and Hauser, administered by the U.S. Forest Service; and Mt. San Jacinto and Cuyamaca Mountains State Wilderness Areas.

C. Manageability

The WSA is unmanageable as wilderness. Its size, the USGS, and configuration of developed lands outside make it impossible to ensure outstanding opportunities for either solitude or primitive and unconfined recreation. Outside sights and sounds already limit solitude in a significant portion of the WSA. Additional development of private property which borders directly on the WSA for about five miles is likely at some time in the future, and would further restrict opportunities for solitude and the quality of the primitive recreation experience available within this WSA.

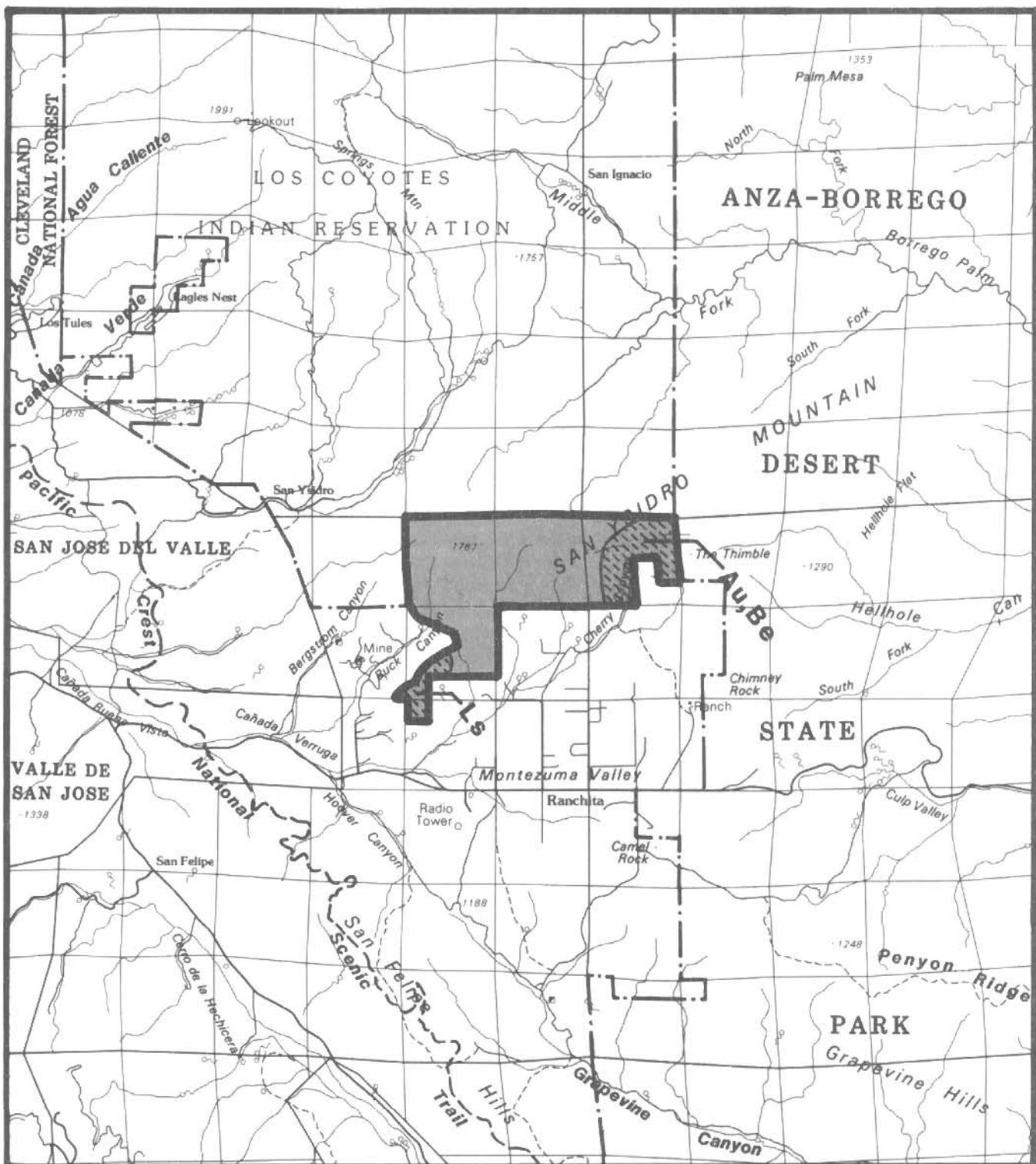
Military overflights in this WSA must be considered to maintain the integrity of the existing and future national defense mission as well as the wilderness resource.

D. Energy and Mineral Resource Values

1. Summary of Information Known at the Time of the Preliminary Suitability Recommendation: The San Ysidro Mountain WSA is located in the BLM McCain Valley Geology-Energy-Mineral (G-E-M) Resource Area (GRA). GRA file data indicate the existence of mineral occurrences in the WSA. However, the GRA file is much too broad in scope to classify this WSA for occurrence potential.
2. Summary of Significant New Mineral Resource Data Collected Since the Preliminary Suitability Recommendation Which Should be Considered in the Final Decision: The 1963 California Division of Mines and Geology (CDMG) County Report 3 lists San Diego County mines and prospects by commodity that were known up to 1962. The report indicates that the eastern area of the WSA was mined in 1915 for pink beryl. This area was also mined for gold from 1890 to 1915. A formation of marble (limestone) extends into the southern part of the WSA. Map 2 illustrates the areas that have been determined to have a high potential for occurrence of these commodities.

The U.S. Geological Survey designated the area that includes this WSA as potentially valuable for geothermal resources in 1978.

The San Ysidro Mountain WSA is included in the Montezuma mining district. The WSA contained 14 unpatented lode and placer mining claims as of December 1987, concentrated in the southwestern portion of the area. Also, as of December 1987 no mineral sales or leases had been issued within the WSA. The following table summarizes the active mining claims.



	NONE	Recommended for Wilderness
		Recommended for Non Wilderness
		Land outside WSA Recommended for Wilderness
		Split Estate
		State
		Private

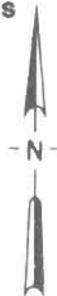
Explanation

	High Potential for the Occurrence of Energy and/or Non-energy Minerals
	Moderate Potential for the Occurrence of Energy and/or Non-energy Minerals
M	Moderate Mineral Potential Location in a High Mineral Potential Area
H	High Mineral Potential Location in a Moderate Mineral Potential Area

Commodity Symbols

Au	Gold
Be	Beryllium
Ls	Limestone

San Ysidro Mountain Mineral Resource Potential



**MAP-2
060-022**

Table 4 - Mining Claims

TYPE MINING CLAIM	NUMBER			ACRES		
	SUITABLE	NONSUIT.	TOTAL	SUITABLE	NONSUIT.	TOTAL
Lode	N/A	11	11	N/A	220	220
Placer	N/A	3	3	N/A	120	120
Mill Site	N/A	0	0	N/A	0	0
Total	N/A	14	14	N/A	340	340

E. Impacts on Resources

Table 5 - Comparative Summary of the Impacts by Alternative

Impact Topic	Proposed Action (No Wilderness/No Action)	All Wilderness-Alternative
Impact on Wilderness Values	Minor to moderate negative impacts to naturalness and solitude will result from two potential mining operations and a recreational trail. This trail will have a moderate positive impact on primitive recreational opportunities. Mechanized fire suppression and pre-suppression will have a moderate, but short-term negative impact to naturalness, minor to moderate localized negative impacts to special features (sensitive plants), and a minor impact to solitude.	Net effect would be the retention and long-term protection of the area's wilderness values. Elimination of mining and use of mechanical equipment for fire pre-suppression activities would result in minor positive impacts to naturalness. Impacts to other wilderness resources would be negligible

F. Local Social and Economic Considerations

No local social or economic considerations were identified in the EIS for the Section 202 Wilderness Recommendations, Eastern San Diego County Planning Unit. Therefore, no further discussion of this topic will occur in this document.

G. Summary of WSA-Specific Public Comments

Public comments were solicited throughout all phases in the development of the Eastern San Diego County MFP. The following is a summary of all comments received. Known inaccuracies are noted in parentheses.

1. Inventory Phase: Some respondents agreed with the BIM's findings. They stated that the area offers outstanding opportunities for solitude and primitive recreation such as hiking. Other respondents mentioned roads, mines, and houses in Buck Canyon which would make that area ineligible for wilderness consideration. Also noted was the fact that the area would probably not meet wilderness criteria without the adjacent proposed area in Anza-Borrego State Park.
2. Study Phase: Several comments received during the inventory phase concerned study phase considerations. They mentioned the need for wildlife protection, the desire for public access to Cherry Canyon Road, and the view that mineral exploration and development is more important than wilderness.
3. Proposed Livestock Grazing and Wilderness Management for the Eastern San Diego County Planning Unit - Draft EIS: During the review of the Draft EIS, 23 letters were received from Federal, State, and local agencies, organizations, and individuals. Only three of these responses addressed the San Ysidro WSA. Two favored a wilderness designation for this WSA but gave no reasons. An oil company stated that the region has potential for geothermal resources. They urged that the potential be carefully evaluated throughout the WSA and any promising areas be exempted from wilderness designation.
4. Management Framework Plan (MFP) for Eastern San Diego County Planning Unit - Wilderness Recommendations: Out of approximately 60 responses to the MFP, only two specifically mentioned the San Ysidro WSA; one wanted a wilderness designation for this unit, and the other urged that this WSA be transferred to the State Park System rather than being sold to private owners. Eleven other respondents, including the Board of Supervisors of San Diego County, stated that they wanted wilderness for all of the WSAs in the planning unit.

Three respondents whose particular interest was four-wheel drive recreation, opposed all wilderness in this region. One individual wanted this land to be used for homesteading rather than wilderness.

