

Sawtooth Mountains A

CA-060-024A

SAWTOOTH MOUNTAINS A WILDERNESS STUDY AREA (WSA)

(CA-060-024A)

1. THE STUDY AREA --- 3,883 acres

The Sawtooth Mountains A WSA is located in east-central San Diego County, about 35 miles south of Borrego Springs and 95 miles east of San Diego. This WSA consists entirely of public lands administered by the BLM (see Map 1 and Table 1). It is separated from the much larger, Sawtooth Mountains B WSA (CA-060-024B), which is recommended for wilderness designation, by a one-lane dirt road and a private ranch in Storm Canyon.

The north WSA boundary traces the boundary between public and private lands. The public land in this area comprises only portions of sections, creating an irregular, stair-step shape for the north side of the WSA. At the northeast corner near County Highway S2, the east WSA boundary cuts off an approximate 80-acre parcel of public land lacking wilderness characteristics, and then once again follows the public-private land boundary to a location just south of Troutman Mountain. Here the Storm Canyon road becomes the boundary, separating Sawtooth Mountains A from Sawtooth Mountains B. Near the head of Storm Canyon, the boundary leaves the road to skirt private property containing a ranch. The remaining mile of the south boundary on the flanks of Garnet Peak adjoins the Cleveland National Forest. The mile-long west WSA boundary adjoins an isolated portion of Anza-Borrego Desert State Park.

The WSA is situated between County Highways S1 and S2 at a location where the two highways are only five miles apart, yet there is no public vehicular access from either highway. Highway S2 passes within a quarter mile of the area's northeast corner. Although the Storm Canyon road forming part of the WSA's east boundary connects with the highway, it is a private road protected by a locked gate, not available for use by the general public. Sawtooth Mountains A WSA includes parts of two grazing allotments, Vallecitos and Oriflamme.

About 75% of the WSA is a steep ridge running northeast to southwest; the remaining 25% is alluvial valley. Elevations range from 1,760 to 5,360 feet. Desert scrub covers the valley floor and the lower portion of the ridge, with chaparral appearing at about 2,800 feet on some of the north-facing slopes. The higher elevations are completely covered with dense chaparral. A spring near the north edge of the WSA is the only known permanent water source.

The WSA was studied under Section 202 of the Federal Land Policy and Management Act (FLPMA). 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 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
3,883 acres recommended for
nonwilderness

No wilderness is the recommendation for this WSA. The entire acreage in this WSA is released for uses other than wilderness. This recommendation will be implemented in a manner which will use all practical means to avoid or minimize environmental impacts.

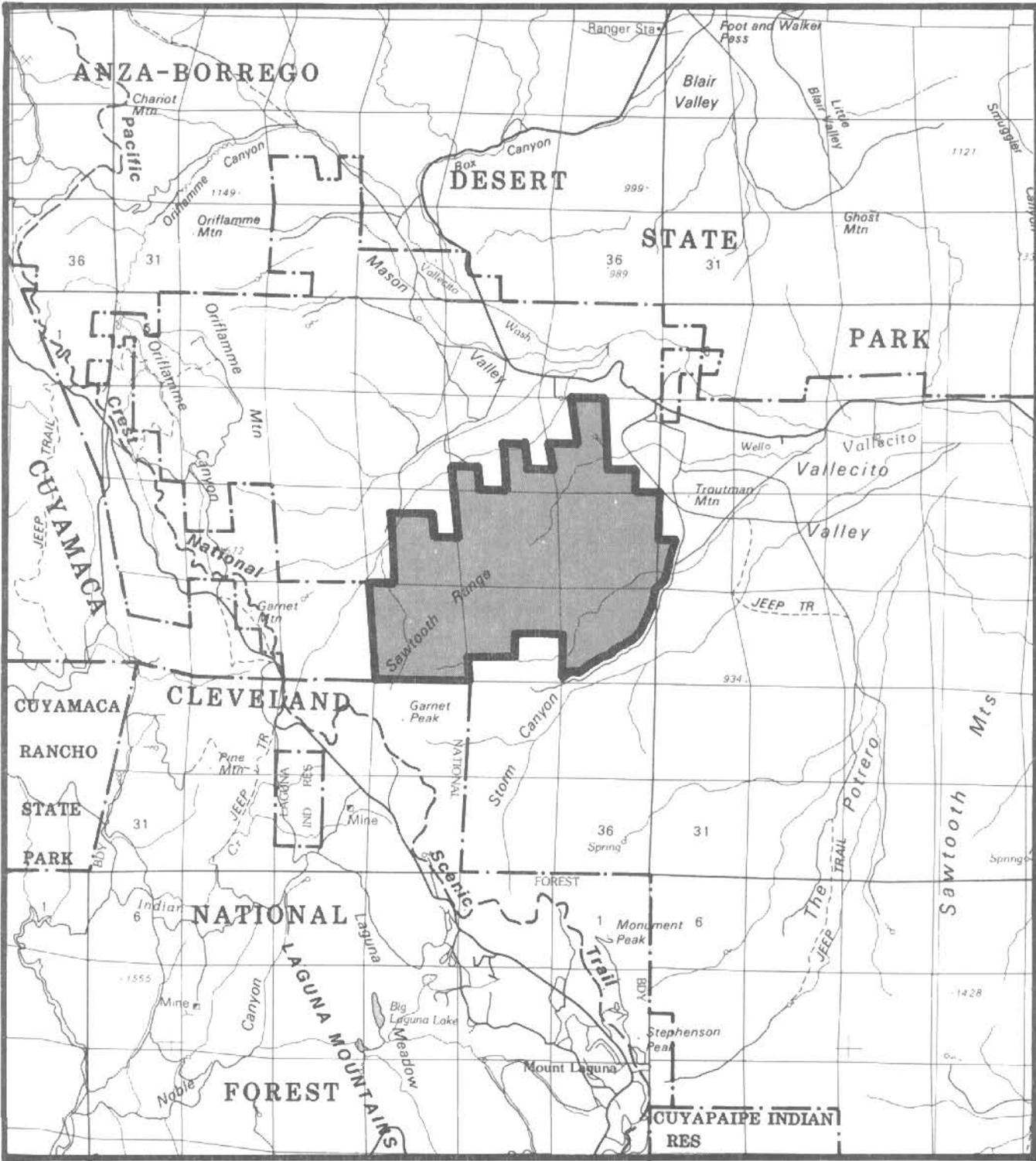
All wilderness is the environmentally preferable alternative. This is because it will result in the least change from the existing natural environment over the long term. It is not the recommendation for this WSA, however, for the reasons described below.

The Sawtooth Mountains A WSA will continue to be managed in accordance with the Eastern San Diego County Planning Unit MFP, as amended. 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. Mineral exploration is expected to lead to the development in the mid-1990s of one small underground mining operation in T. 5 E., R. 14 S., section 13. Less than one-half mile of new road would be constructed and one acre would be used for tailings. Ore processing would occur outside the WSA. No routes of travel have been identified within the WSA.

The no wilderness recommendation is based on the following rationale: (1) the release of adjacent National Forest lands from wilderness consideration makes a combined area of over 5,000 acres impossible, (2) current management has proven effective in maintaining the area's existing resources, (3) the WSA may be unmanageable as wilderness because of the likelihood of intrusions on wilderness values from adjacent private lands, and (4) the wilderness values of the area are not considered outstanding.

Sawtooth Mountains A was made a wilderness study area because it is contiguous with 1,600 acres of Cleveland National Forest (USFS) lands which were thought to have potential wilderness values during the BLM inventory. The 1,600-acre USFS parcel could have linked BLM's Sawtooth Mountains A and Sawtooth Mountains B WSAs, which are otherwise separated by a road and private lands. The USFS studied the 1,600-acre parcel and recommended it nonsuitable for wilderness designation in the draft Environmental Impact Statement (EIS) for the Cleveland National Forest Plan. Before the final EIS for the Forest Plan was completed, the 1,600-acre parcel was released from further wilderness study by the California Wilderness Act of 1984.

The WSA's small acreage compared with its relatively lengthy, ten-mile boundary with private lands would make it impossible to ensure outstanding opportunities for either solitude or primitive and unconfined recreation. If further development of the private property occurs, sights and sounds from that area, with its finger-like intrusions into the north side of the WSA, would reduce the WSA's wilderness values.



NONE

RECOMMENDED FOR WILDERNESS



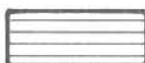
RECOMMENDED FOR NONWILDERNESS



LAND OUTSIDE WSA RECOMMENDED FOR WILDERNESS



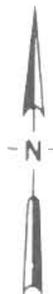
SPLIT ESTATE



STATE



PRIVATE



**Sawtooth Mountains-A
Proposal
MAP-1**



060-024A
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)	3,883
Split Estate	(BLM surface only)	0
Inholdings		
State		0
Private		0
Total		<u>3,883</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		0
Inholdings		
State		0
Private		0
 <u>Within the Area Not Recommended for Wilderness</u>		 <u>Acres</u>
BLM	(surface and subsurface)	3,883
Split Estate	(BLM surface only)	0
Total BLM Land Not Recommended for Wilderness		<u>3,883</u>

3. CRITERIA CONSIDERED IN DEVELOPING THE WILDERNESS RECOMMENDATIONS

A. Wilderness Characteristics

1. Naturalness: The Sawtooth Mountains A WSA appears to have been affected primarily by the forces of nature, exhibiting almost no evidence of human activity in its interior. There is a livestock grazing improvement consisting of one mile of pipeline with a trough. A narrow dirt road providing access to private property in Storm Canyon forms about two miles of the east boundary. Fence lines form the WSA boundary in several locations where the study area abuts private property.

2. Solitude: Although the area is small, opportunities for solitude are ample because of very low visitation and the screening effect of rugged topography.

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: Hampered somewhat by limited legal access, the WSA offers opportunities for hiking, hunting for mule deer and upland game, and general nature study. Backpacking opportunities within the area itself are restricted by its small size, but backpackers need only walk across a dirt road to include portions of the much larger Sawtooth Mountains B WSA in their trip. No formal hiking trails exist, so all hiking is cross-country. It is possible to hike onto the National Forest and intercept the Pacific Crest National Scenic Trail about one-quarter mile from the southwest corner of the WSA.
4. Special Features: One spring is found at the northern extreme of the WSA, about one-half mile south of Highway S2. Flow from the spring is relatively minor, normally not exceeding one gallon per minute.

Two plant species of special concern occur in the WSA. Mount Laguna alumroot (Heuchera brevistaminea) is under status review by the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service (US F&WS) for possible listing as threatened or endangered. Avenia compacta is listed by the California Native Plant Society as endangered in California but more common elsewhere.

The San Diego coast horned lizard, under status review by USF&WS, occurs within the WSA on granitic outcrops. The spotted bat, also under status review by USF&WS, is suspected to occur here but its presence has not been confirmed. The WSA is historic habitat for the peninsular bighorn sheep, listed as rare by the State of California and currently under status review by USF&WS. The area is probably used transiently by bighorn at the present time. The WSA is part of a larger area which BLM and the California Department of Fish and Game (CDFG) have targeted for the reintroduction of peninsular bighorn sheep, although no active management efforts are planned inside the study area. The USF&WS considers the loggerhead shrike sensitive in Region 1. The willow flycatcher is also a USF&WS sensitive species and a species of special concern to the CDFG. The former occurs year-long in the WSA, while the latter is a summer resident.

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 3,883 acres of the California Chaparral/California Oakwoods ecosystem. Wilderness designation of the Sawtooth Mountains A WSA would not increase the ecological diversity of the NWPS.

Table 2 - Ecosystem Representation

Bailey-Kuchler Classification Domain/Province/PNV	<u>NWPS Areas</u>		<u>Other BLM Studies</u>	
	areas	acres	areas	acres
<u>NATIONWIDE</u>				
California Chaparral/ California Oakwoods	4	105,301	6	35,843
<u>CALIFORNIA</u>				
California Chaparral/ California Oakwoods	4	105,301	6	35,843

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 five 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	<u>NWPS areas</u>		<u>Other BLM Studies</u>	
	areas	acres	areas	acres
<u>California</u>				
Anaheim-Santa Ana	25	2,823,534	153	5,703,616
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
San Diego	15	1,043,680	100	3,378,814

3. Balancing the geographic distribution of wilderness areas: The Sawtooth Mountains A WSA is within 50 air miles of seven BLM WSAs recommended for wilderness designation, including the adjacent Sawtooth Mountains B WSA. The closest designated wilderness is in

Anza-Borrego Desert State Park. Less than 50 air miles away are five other wilderness areas: Agua Tibia, Santa Rosa, Pine Creek, and Hauser, administered by the U.S. Forest Service; and Cuyamaca Mountains State Wilderness Area.

C. Manageability

The WSA may not be manageable as wilderness. Its small acreage compared with its relatively lengthy, ten-mile boundary with private lands would make it impossible to ensure future outstanding opportunities for either solitude or primitive and unconfined recreation. If further development occurs, sights and sounds from the private property, with its finger-like intrusions into the north side of the WSA, would reduce the WSA's wilderness values. Although the private property presently contains few improvements, it is conceivable that wilderness designation could spur accelerated development of much of the private property.

The two grazing allotments which exist within the WSA are not expected to create any manageability problems if this area were designated wilderness.

D. Energy and Mineral Resource Values

1. Summary of Information Known at the Time of the Preliminary Suitability Recommendation: The Sawtooth Mountains A WSA lies within the BLM Vallecito Mountains Geology-Energy-Mineral (G-E-M) Resource Area (GRA). There were no mining claims located in the WSA in 1980. The 1980 GRA Report indicates that mineral resource information on the WSA was insufficient to determine the mineral potential classification of the WSA.

Weber (1963, Geology and mineral resources of San Diego County, California, California Division of Mines and Geology, County Report 3) lists, by commodity, the known mines and mineral occurrences within this WSA and the immediate area. The southwestern portion has two prospects for tungsten. Two gold prospects were located in the north, north-central, and central portion of the WSA. None of the prospects has recorded mineral production. Under the BLM mineral classification system, these areas are considered as having a moderate potential for the occurrence of these resources based on known occurrence and favorable geology (see Map 2).

Several gem and mineral societies in San Diego and Imperial Valley have reported collecting schorl (a variety of hornblende), tourmaline, garnet, and epidote in the granitic batholith in the general area. The batholith has a number of intrusive dikes, sills, laccoliths, migmatites, quartz, granite, and pegmatites consisting of aplite that are favorable environments for mineral collection of gems and metallic mineralization. Based on similar geology, the southeastern portion and two areas in the north-central portion of the WSA are considered under the BLM classification system as having a moderate potential for the occurrence of gem minerals.

The Sawtooth Mountains A WSA lies within the Deer Park mining district.

2. Summary of Significant New Mineral Resource Data Collected Since the Preliminary Suitability Recommendation Which Should be Considered in the Final Decision: As of December 1987, there was no mining activity occurring in this WSA. There are no unpatented mining claims, mineral sales, leases or permits on record with the BLM as of January 1988.

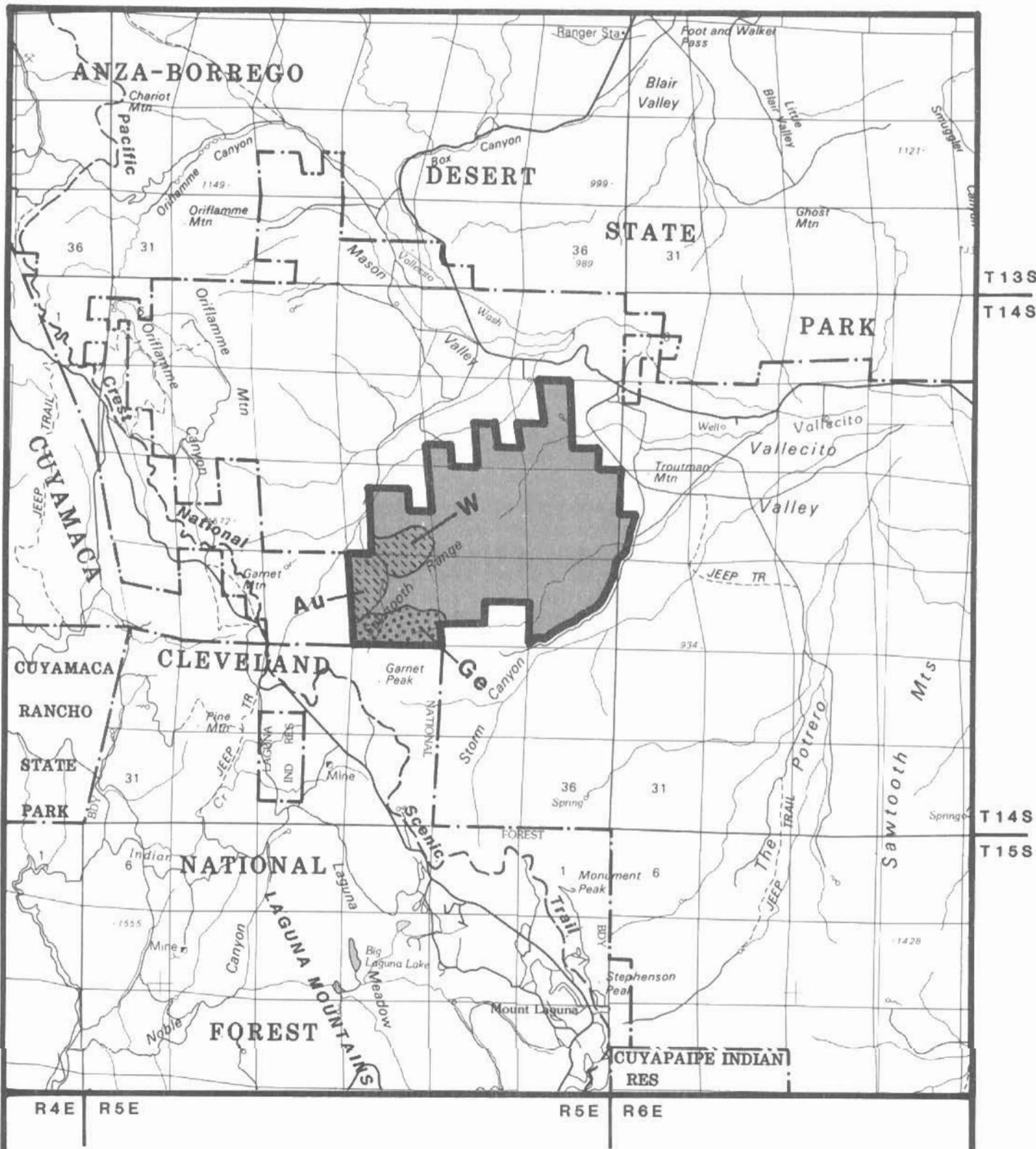
E. Impacts on Resources

Table 4 - Comparative Summary of the Impacts by Alternative

Issue Topic	Proposed Action (No Wilderness/No Action)	All Wilderness Alternative
Impact on Wilderness Values	Minor negative impacts to wilderness values will occur from the installation of one apiary site. One mining operation will have a moderate negative effect on naturalness. Mechanized fire suppression and pre-suppression activities will have a moderate, but short-term negative impact to naturalness, and a lesser impact to solitude. Grazing will have a minor negative impact to the bighorn sheep reintroduction program.	Net effect of this alternative would be the retention and long-term protection of the area's wilderness values. Grazing would have a minor negative impact to the bighorn sheep reintroduction program.

F. Local Social and Economic Considerations

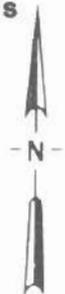
No local social or economic considerations were identified in the EIS for the Section 202 Wilderness Recommendations, Eastern San Diego County Planning Unit. Therefore, no further discussion of this topic will occur in this document.



	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
Ge	Gem
W	Tungsten



Sawtooth Mountains-A Mineral Resource Potential



MAP-2
060-024A

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. Sawtooth Mountains A, B, and C WSAs were treated as one wilderness study area up through the draft EIS stage. Consequently, the following public comment summary includes statements made about all three areas. Although some respondents directed their comments specifically toward A, B, or C, most did not specify a particular area.

1. Inventory Phase: Some comments agreed with the BLM's findings. Others mentioned roads and conflicting uses within the WSA, such as an apiary, which they believed disqualified the area for wilderness consideration.
2. Study Phase: A few comments received during the inventory phase concerned study phase considerations. They expressed the belief that this area is being considered for wilderness in order to protect bighorn sheep, but that the sheep are not affected by humans and do not need this protection.
3. Proposed Livestock Grazing and Wilderness Management for the Eastern San Diego County Planning Unit - Draft EIS: The proposed action recommended that 25,515 acres of the Sawtooth Mountain WSA be designated suitable for wilderness and 5,629 acres be designated non-suitable. The non-suitable areas included the northwestern portion of this WSA; sections 19, 20 and 21, T. 14 S., R. 6 E.; and Potrero Canyon.

During the review of the Draft EIS, 23 letters were received from Federal, State, and local agencies; organizations; and individuals. Only seven of these responses addressed the Sawtooth WSA. Five favored a wilderness designation, one opposed wilderness, and an oil company stated that the region has potential for geothermal resources.

Wilderness proponents wanted the entire Sawtooth WSA declared suitable, saying that this WSA, which had been excluded, was worthy of wilderness designation. They proposed that for the immediate future, the area be maintained under wilderness management until acquisition of the Spencer Ranch becomes feasible. They also wanted to include sections 19, 20, and 21, T. 14 S., R. 6 E., within the suitable area, noting that the road would make a more manageable boundary than a fenced section line.

They requested that Potrero Canyon be closed except for maintenance of watering facilities for livestock and wildlife.

The respondent opposing wilderness for this area was an association of four-wheel drive clubs. Its major concern was the peninsular bighorn sheep. The respondent stated that wilderness in this area would be in direct conflict with sound management and manipulation of both the bighorn sheep and their habitat.

An oil company urged that geothermal resource potential be carefully evaluated throughout the WSA and that areas found to have potential be exempted from wilderness designation.

4. Management Framework Plan (MFP) for Eastern San Diego County Planning Unit - Wilderness Recommendations: The Management Framework Plan recommended a designation of 27,205 acres as suitable and 3,892 acres as unsuitable. The difference between this and the recommendation of the Draft EIS on wilderness management was that portions of sections 19 and 20, T.14S., R.6E., and most of Potrero Canyon were added to the suitable portion.

Approximately 54 out of a total of 60 comments gave an opinion of the Sawtooth WSA. Eleven were non-specific, in that they requested wilderness status for all of the WSAs within the planning unit. Included in this group was the San Diego County Board of Supervisors. Ten respondents supported the BIM's recommendation of partial wilderness for this WSA, and the remaining 33 wanted the entire WSA designated suitable. The Cleveland National Forest noted that a portion of this WSA is contiguous with potential National Forest wilderness, and that if Sawtooth is designated wilderness, the National Forest may consider the wilderness option for adjacent lands.

One organization and two individuals wanted no further wilderness in this region, as they wanted four-wheel drive access for recreation. A representative of a homeowners association requested that the Canebrake Canyon-Inner Pasture area be designated for low-intensity multiple use, since this area has a road, two landing strips, and two ranches, and also because access is needed for firefighting equipment. Another respondent wanted the Potrero road kept open.