

# **Sawtooth Mountains C**

*CA-060-024C*

SAWTOOTH MOUNTAINS C WILDERNESS STUDY AREA (WSA)

(CA-060-024C)

1. THE STUDY AREA — 2,454 acres

The Sawtooth Mountains C WSA is located in east-central San Diego County, about 45 miles south of Borrego Springs and 95 miles east of San Diego. This 2454-acre WSA consists entirely of public lands administered by the BLM (see Map 1 and Table 1).

The WSA is a narrow strip of land sandwiched between Canebrake Road and private property on the north, and Anza-Borrego Desert State Park on the east, south, and west. It is separated from the much larger Sawtooth Mountains B WSA (CA-060-024B) (which is recommended for wilderness designation) by Canebrake Road. The upper portion of the road separating the two WSAs is on public lands and has been closed to motor vehicles. The lower portion of the road is on private property, and provides access from County Highway S2 to residences in Canebrake Canyon. Closed by a locked gate, this private portion of the road is not available for use by the general public.

The WSA is a north-facing, rocky slope furrowed by dry washes that broaden into alluvial valleys. The area is approximately 80% mountainside and 20% alluvial valleys. A well-developed alluvial fan in the north-central portion of the WSA covers over 300 acres. Elevations range from 1,080 feet in the northeast corner to 3,400 feet in the southwest corner. Vegetation is almost exclusively desert scrub, although chaparral begins to appear at the higher elevations at the south end. A spring on private property in Canebrake Canyon provides that drainage on the WSA boundary with year-round flowing water.

The Master Title Plat shows a right-of-way (R-1285) for a pipeline within Lot 46, in section 3 of T. 15 S., R. 7 E., SBM. The right-of-way holder of record is the Canebrake County Water District.

The WSA was studied under Section 202 of the Federal Land Policy and Management Act (FLPMA). The rationale for considering Sawtooth Mountains C a wilderness study area was that Anza-Borrego Desert State Park was studying the wilderness suitability of its contiguous land. That portion of the state park has since been designated wilderness. The WSA is within BLM's Eastern San Diego County Planning Unit, for which a management framework plan (MFP) was completed in 1981. Plan amendments affecting the recommendation for this WSA were added in 1982. 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  
2,454 acres recommended for nonwilderness

No wilderness is the recommendation for the Sawtooth Mountains C WSA, as described in the Eastern San Diego County Planning Unit MFP, 1982 amendment 43. 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 study area 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. Fire suppression and pre-suppression activities will be guided by a resource area fire management plan to be completed in approximately 1990. It is expected that the plan will allow the use of mechanized equipment, and that existing routes will be used as firebreaks, but will not be maintained. No new firebreaks will be constructed. Following completion of the plan, prescribed burning could occur at the rate of 500 acres every five to ten years, in 30-acre to 50-acre increments. It is expected that one small mine will be developed in the mid-1990s in the south half of Section 7. One-quarter mile of new road would be necessary to reach the mineralized zone, and total surface disturbance would be less than two acres. No routes of travel have been identified within the WSA.

The no wilderness recommendation is based on the following rationale: (1) management of the area as wilderness would be difficult because of the likelihood of additional intrusions on wilderness values from adjacent private parcels, (2) the wilderness values of the area are not considered outstanding, and (3) current management has proven effective in maintaining the area's existing resources.

The WSA is essentially a slope overlooking private property, and its wilderness values are therefore impacted by sights and sounds originating there. Further development of the private property would cause a significant decrease in opportunities for solitude and the quality of the primitive recreation experience to be had within the WSA.

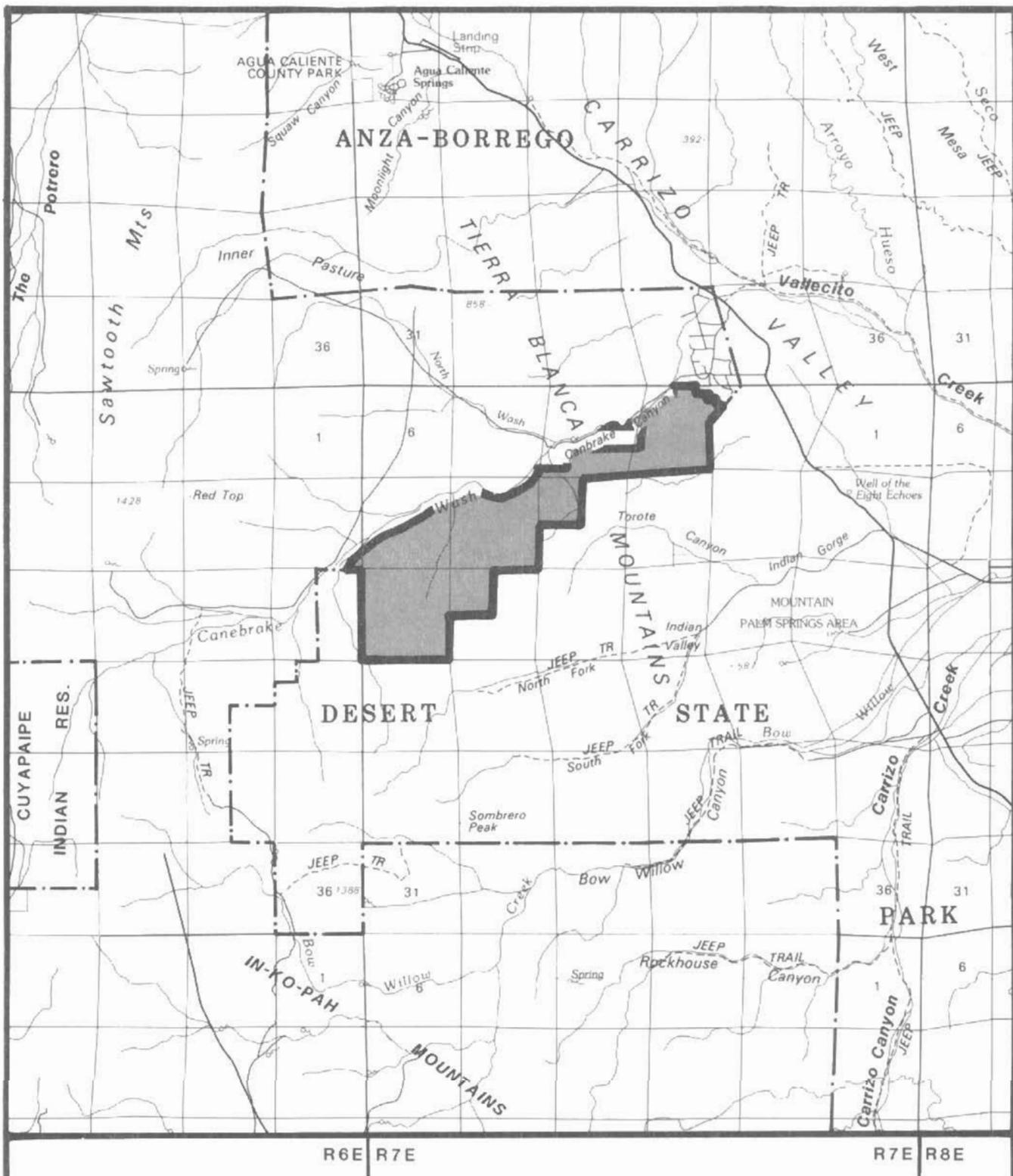
The WSA's wilderness values have already suffered adverse impacts from development of the private property, which contains an improved dirt road and numerous recreation residences. The proximity of the private residential

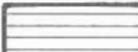
area, visible from much of the WSA, reduces the perception of remoteness. In addition, the area's value for recreation is somewhat limited because there is no legal access to the WSA boundary for motor vehicles.

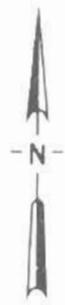
Although wilderness designation of the Sawtooth Mountains C WSA would compliment management of the adjacent wilderness of Anza-Borrego Desert State Park, the wilderness values of the extensive state park lands stand on their own without this WSA. Anza-Borrego Desert State Park's wilderness resources will not be impacted in any significant way by the proposed action.

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

<u>Within Wilderness Study Area</u>		<u>Acres</u>
BLM	(surface and subsurface)	2,454
Split Estate	(BLM surface only)	0
Inholdings		
State		0
Private		0
Total		<u>2,454</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)	2,454
Split Estate	(BLM surface only)	0
Total BLM Land Not Recommended for Wilderness		<u>2,454</u>



- |   |   |                            |   |              |
|---|---|----------------------------|---|--------------|
|  | NONE  | RECOMMENDED FOR WILDERNESS |  | SPLIT ESTATE |
|  | RECOMMENDED FOR NONWILDERNESS               |                            |  | STATE        |
|  | LAND OUTSIDE WSA RECOMMENDED FOR WILDERNESS |                            |  | PRIVATE      |



**Sawtooth Mountains-C  
Proposal  
MAP-1**



060-024C  
JUNE, 1988

### 3. CRITERIA CONSIDERED IN DEVELOPING THE WILDERNESS RECOMMENDATIONS

#### A. Wilderness Characteristics

1. Naturalness: The Sawtooth Mountains C WSA appears to have been affected primarily by the forces of nature. Although the north WSA boundary coincides with Canebrake Canyon, which contains an improved dirt road and private property with numerous recreation residences, there is almost no evidence of human activity in the WSA. On the south the WSA borders Anza-Borrego Desert State Park Wilderness.
2. Solitude: Although the area is small, opportunities for solitude exist because of extremely low visitation. However, the proximity of the private residential area, visible from much of the WSA, reduces the perception of remoteness. The best opportunities for solitude are found in the southwest portion of the area. This is the widest portion of the WSA, farthest from the developed private property in Canebrake Canyon, and containing the most topographic relief to screen outside sights and sounds.

This WSA is periodically overflowed 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: Opportunities are limited because there is no legal access to the WSA boundary for motor vehicles. Also, on its own, this area is too small to provide much opportunity for primitive recreation. However, when considered with the adjacent state park land to the south and BLM's Sawtooth Mountains B WSA across Canebrake Road to the north, the area offers opportunities for hiking, backpacking, and general nature study. Opportunities for upland game and mule deer hunting are limited, since hunting is prohibited in the state park.
4. Special Features: There are four plant species within the WSA listed by the California Native Plant Society as rare in California, but more common elsewhere: Ayenia compacta, Bursera microphylla, Cassia covesii, and Mirabilis tenuiloba. However, none of these species is under status review by the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service (US F&WS).

The San Diego coast horned lizard, under status review by US F&WS, occurs within the WSA on granitic outcrops. The spotted bat, also under status review by US F&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 US F&WS. 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 US F&WS considers the loggerhead shrike sensitive in Region 1. The willow flycatcher is also a US F&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 2,454 acres of the California Chaparral/California Oakwoods ecosystem. Wilderness designation of the Sawtooth Mountains C 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	37,272
<u>CALIFORNIA</u>				
California Chaparral/ California Oakwoods	4	105,301	6	37,272

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 C 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 adjacent to the WSA 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 Sawtooth Mountains C WSA is manageable as wilderness. However, the future quality of opportunities for solitude and primitive or unconfined recreation would remain uncertain. The WSA is essentially a slope overlooking private property, and its wilderness values are therefore very vulnerable to sights and sounds originating there. Further development of the private property could cause a significant decrease in opportunities for solitude and the quality of the primitive recreation experience to be had within the WSA.

Military overflights in the 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 Sawtooth Mountains C WSA is located in the BLM Vallecito Mountains Geology-Energy-Mineral (G-E-M) Resource Area (GRA). BLM had not classified the WSA for mineral occurrence potential at the time of the preliminary wilderness recommendations. The WSA is within an area that has been designated as prospectively valuable for geothermal resources by the U.S. Geological Survey (USGS).

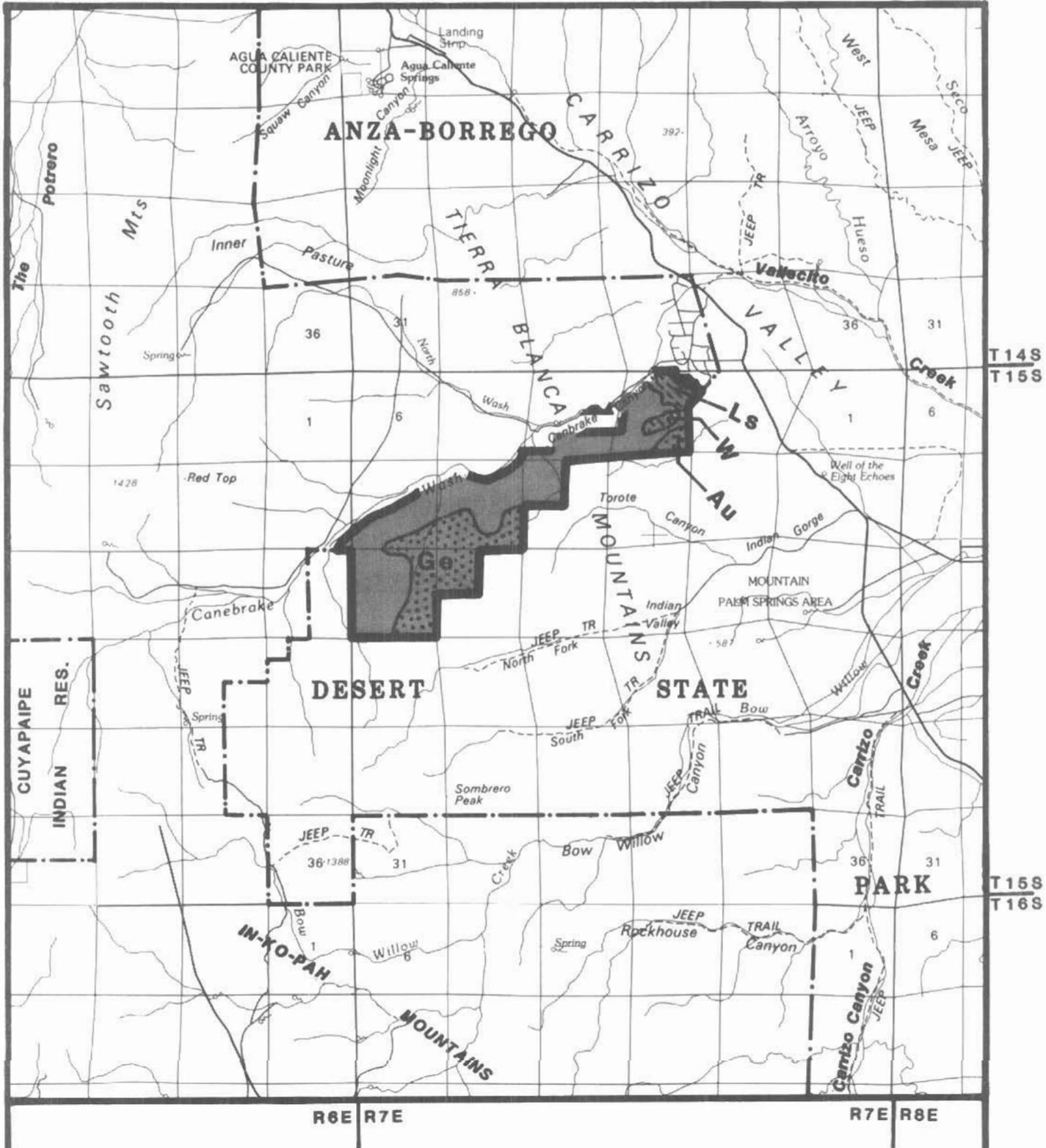
The 1963 California Division of Mines and Geology (CDMG) County Report 3 lists mines and commodities, prospects, and mineral production from the late 1800s until 1963. The CDMG report shows that in 1940, \$2,000 worth of scheelite (tungsten ore) was mined in the far eastern part of the WSA. This area is shown on Map 2 as having a high potential for the occurrence of tungsten minerals under the BLM classification system. Small amounts of scheelite were mined in the southwestern section in the 1950s but were abandoned because of the low grade encountered.

2. Summary of Significant New Mineral Resource Data Collected Since the Preliminary Suitability Recommendation Which Should be Considered in the Final Decision: The far eastern section of the WSA also had several prospects for low grade gold. Production was not given in the CDMG report. Two gold prospects are located in the southwestern section of the WSA but neither was developed due to the erratic deposit in the contact zone.

Dolomite and limestone were mined in the early 1950s immediately outside of the eastern portion of the WSA. The geologic structure mined extends into the eastern portion of the WSA, and is considered to have a high potential for the occurrence of dolomite and limestone resources under the BLM mineral classification system.

The WSA is a favorite region for gem and mineral collecting. 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 gem minerals and metallic mineralization. Based on similar geology, the southwestern portion of the WSA is considered under the BLM classification system as having a moderate potential for the occurrence of gem minerals.

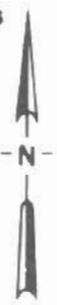
The Sawtooth Mountains C WSA is within the Deer Park mining district. As of December 1987 there were no mining claims, mineral sales or leases within this WSA.



- 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** Gemstones
  - Ls** Limestone/ Dolomite
  - W** Tungsten



**Sawtooth Mountains-C  
Mineral Resource Potential**



**MAP-2  
060-024C**

E. Impacts on Resources

Table 4 - Comparative Summary of the Impacts by Alternative

<u>Issue Topic</u>	<u>Proposed Action (No Wilderness/No Action)</u>	<u>All Wilderness Alternative</u>
Impact on Wilderness Values	<p>Minor negative impacts to wilderness values will result from mining and apiary site relocation. The area's special features, Peninsular bighorn sheep (to be reintroduced) and archaeological resources, will experience minor negative impacts from the above activities, and also from fire suppression and presuppression. Greatest impacts will occur from range management actions, which will have a moderate negative effect on both naturalness and Peninsular bighorn sheep reintroduction.</p>	<p>The net effect of this alternative would be the retention and long-term protection of area's wilderness values. Range management actions would have a very minor negative effect on naturalness, solitude, and preservation of archaeological resources, and a moderate negative impact on bighorn sheep reintroduction.</p>
Impact on Preservation of Archeological Resources and Native American Values	<p>Moderate negative impacts to archaeological sites are possible from mechanized fire suppression. Minor negative impacts are anticipated from a wide range of activities including prescribed burns, apiary activity, grazing development. Minor positive impacts will occur from development of a fire management plan, National Register nomination and monitoring. Research excavations will add to our knowledge and constitute a minor positive impact to the preservation of cultural resources.</p>	<p>This alternative would have an overall minor positive impact upon the preservation of cultural resources since many action are precluded. Minor negative impacts are possible from limited fire suppression and range management activities.</p>

Table 4 - Comparative Summary of the Impacts by Alternative (Cont'd)

There will be minor positive impacts to archaeological investigations since activities permitted under this action allow for a wide range of uses. Any action will, of course, require preparation of suitable environmental documentation, including archaeological investigations. Moderate negative impacts will occur from mechanized fire suppression activities. Moderate positive impacts will result from availability of the area for pure archaeological research.

Minor negative impacts are anticipated from limited fire suppression activities and elimination of apiary sites and research excavations. Minor positive impacts are envisioned from the fire management plan prescribed burn, grazing projects, National Register nomination, and the monitoring program. A moderate negative impact is anticipated from the prohibition of pure archaeological research.

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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. 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 BIM'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 the Sawtooth Mountains A 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 the Sawtooth Mountains A 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. 14 S., R. 6 E., 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 BLM'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.

5. 1982 Amendments to the Eastern San Diego County Management Framework Plan: Four amendments were proposed for the Sawtooth Mountains WSAs, two of which had an effect on Sawtooth Mountains C.

Amendment 43. Delete Sawtooth Mountains C WSA and recommend this area as non-suitable, Class L: This amendment was contingent upon approval of Amendment 45 (see below). The rationale was that "if Amendment 45 is accepted, then area C will overlook Class L non-suitable land and will be difficult to manage for a wilderness experience due to intrusions of sights and sounds of man."

Twenty two individuals, organizations, or governmental agencies commented on the Draft EIS on this amendment. Fifteen respondents favored the proposal and eight opposed it. The State of California Resource Agency opposed it, saying that acceptance would cause management problems to the adjacent State wilderness area by isolating the boundaries and making them awkward to patrol. Management as Class L would have some adverse impacts on the wilderness qualities and could compromise surrounding wilderness areas.

One individual stated that the BLM's rationale was fallacious, and that even if Amendment 45 were accepted, this area, since it is contiguous with a declared wilderness area in Anza-Borrego State Park, could continue to be a potential wilderness area. The other rationale of rejecting this area because of the "sights and sounds" of humans is invalid, since this criteria is not recognized by Congress; the respondent noted further that the sights and sounds are very minor and practically unnoticeable.

Respondents favoring the amendment agreed with the rationale of the draft EIS and gave no additional reasons for rejecting this area as wilderness.

Four letters were received in response to the Final EIS on this amendment. All were opposed to rejecting this area as wilderness for the same reasons given above.

Amendment 45. Change recommendation of a portion of the Sawtooth Mountains B WSA, from suitable to non-suitable, and designate Class L (limited use): The triangular area is bordered on the northeast by North Wash, on the southeast by Canebrake Wash, and on the west by a non-maintained road. The rationale was that this area is a bajada containing several man-made intrusions, including an old airstrip, a fence line, the Crawford Ranch, and some maintained roads. This area would be more properly managed as Class L (limited use) than as wilderness.

Twenty three comments were received in response to the Draft EIS. Fifteen respondents opposed the amendment and eight favored it. Most of those in opposition mentioned potential adverse impacts on bighorn sheep and cultural resources. One respondent requested deferral of the proposal for one year to allow completion of negotiations between the Anza-Borrego Desert State Park and the El Centro Resource Area (BLM). Another respondent said he could accept the amendment as long as the area would remain Class L and not be changed to Class M or Class I. The State of California Resources Agency opposed the amendment, stating it would create a four-mile wide area of Class L land between two State wilderness areas. State management of the wilderness areas would be hampered due to increased exposure of their boundaries to non-wilderness uses. There could be adverse impacts on cultural resources, as well as on wildlife and habitat. The increased use of the area could also hamper the future reintroduction of bighorn sheep into the Sawtooth WSA.

One individual found the justification given for this change by the BLM totally unacceptable, claiming that the airstrip cited as an intrusion has long been out of use and shows sign of natural rehabilitation. It was also stated that the new boundary road on the west is much more likely to have OHV violations than the former boundary in the Canebrake Wash. Opening this road will negatively affect the bighorn sheep now inhabiting the area and will hurt any reintroduction efforts. For these and many other reasons, this individual recommended rejecting the amendment.

No specific justifications were made by those supporting the amendment.

Four comments were received in response to the Final EIS. All were against amendments. No new reasons were given.