

Timbered Crater

CA-030-201

TIMBERED CRATER WILDERNESS STUDY AREA (WSA)

CA-030-201

Includes the Baker Cypress-Lava Instant Study Area CA-030-301

1. THE STUDY AREA — 18,095 acres

The Timbered Crater WSA is located at the junction of Shasta, Siskiyou and Modoc Counties in northeastern California (see Map 1 and Table 1). The nearest town is Fall River Mills, 10 miles south of the WSA. The nearest city, Redding, California, is located 50 miles southwest. The study area contains 17,896 acres of Bureau of Land Management (BLM) land and 199 acres of private land in two parcels belonging to one owner. The WSA is bounded on the northeast by private agricultural lands in the Little Hot Springs Valley. The southeast and western boundaries are formed by the Shasta-Trinity National Forest lands. The southern boundary is formed by the Ahjumawi Lava Springs State Park lands and private lands used for homesites in the vicinity of the north end of Fall River Valley.

The WSA contains all of the Baker Cypress Natural Area (1,148 acres), which was an Instant Study Area (ISA) included as part of this WSA. The Baker Cypress is a minor species of tree restricted to a small number of groves spread along the Cascade Sierra mountains of Northern California and extending into Southern Oregon. The natural area is located in the northern part of the WSA. The remainder of the WSA is mostly made up of a large lava flow. The lava flow is extremely rough and rugged with a lot of exposed rock interspersed with small pockets of soil. The cracks in the lava and soil pockets support a very scattered population of brush, shrubs, mountain mahogany and ponderosa pine. The general topography of the lava flow is characterized by low buttes, shallow depressions and drainages.

The WSA was studied under Section 603 of the Federal Land Policy and Management Act of 1976 (FLPMA) and was included in the North Central California Wilderness EIS, finalized December 1986. There were three alternatives analyzed in the EIS: an all-wilderness alternative, a partial-wilderness alternative designating 80% of the WSA as wilderness and a no-wilderness alternative.

2. RECOMMENDATION AND RATIONALE - 0 acres recommended for wilderness
17,896 BLM acres recommended for non-wilderness

No wilderness is the recommendation for this WSA. The entire acreage in this WSA is released for uses other than wilderness.

The all-wilderness alternative is the environmentally preferred alternative. The no-wilderness alternative will be implemented in a manner which will use all practical means to avoid or minimize environmental impacts.

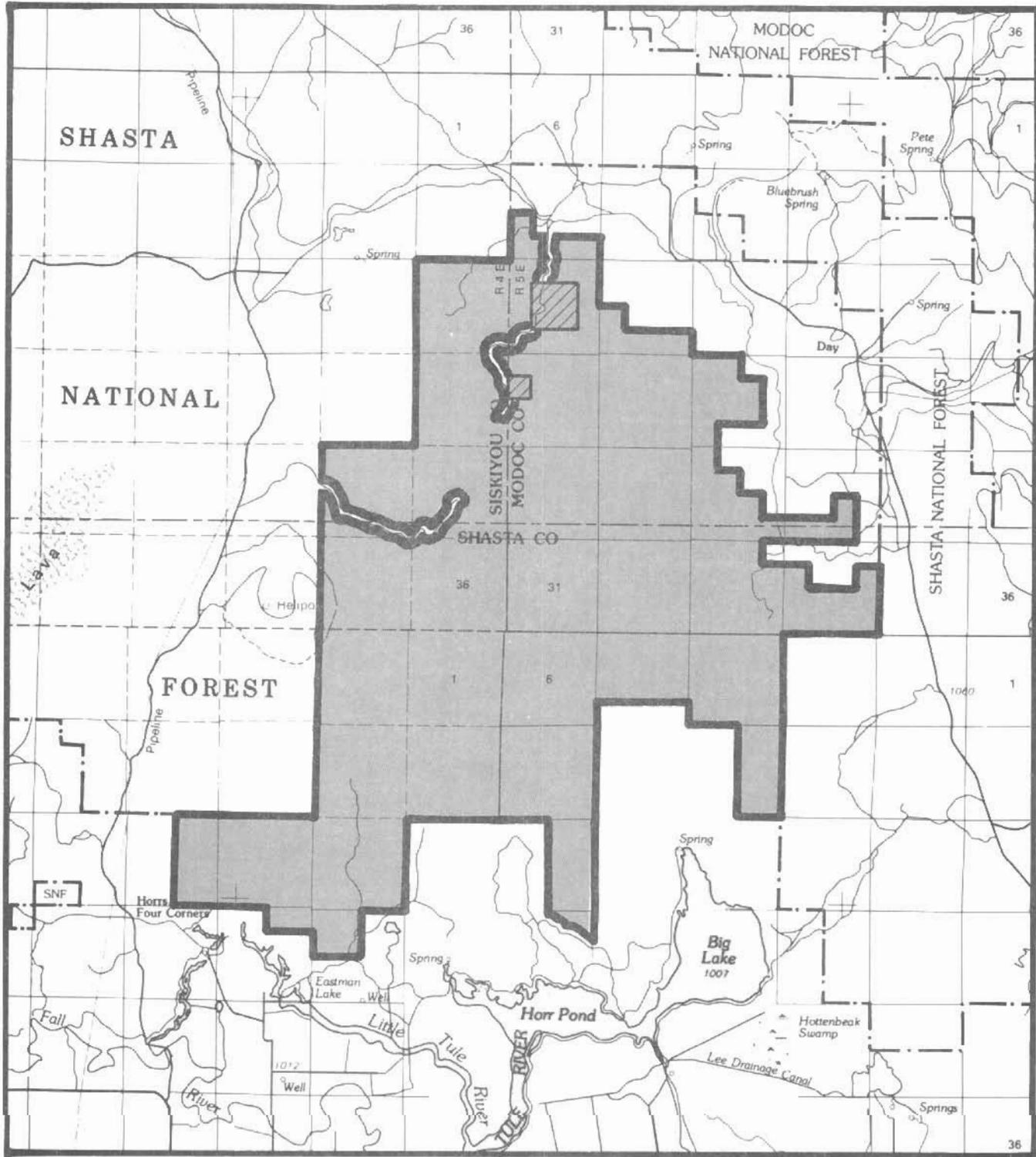
The WSA is recommended nonsuitable because the area's wilderness values are marginal. The quality that an area should have to be added to the National Wilderness Preservation System (NWPS) is lacking in this WSA. The area is natural in character with a few evidences of man, such as an old flat rock quarry and two cherrystemmed roads leading into the WSA. There are approximately five miles of ways, and a primitive route of travel, which will remain available for vehicular use. The area is dull and homogeneous in character, consisting of a fairly level to gently rolling lava bed that contains scattered patches of brush with widely spaced scattered pine trees growing in soil pockets. The only part of the WSA that is distinctive is the Baker cypress found growing in patches near the northern end of the WSA. These are already protected by a withdrawal as a Natural Area. This designation has been effective in providing the area with adequate management and protection.

The WSA has opportunities for solitude but little reason for anyone to go there to avail themselves of this opportunity. The past use of the area has been minimal. People do not get far away from the cherrystemmed roads, due to the rough uneven lava terrain. The opportunities for primitive and unconfined recreation are extremely limited. This terrain, with its rough lava and brushy patches of manzanita or mountain mahogany, makes hiking difficult. Travelling from one place to another, there are no water courses or ridgelines to follow. There are no destination points that would attract a visitor to enter the area. No one would take horses into the area without risking injury. The Baker cypress is located on the north end of the WSA where there is more soil. This area is accessible from the existing cherrystemmed roads and ways in and near the perimeter.

The area is in the western ponderosa forest realm of the Sierra Forest Ecoregion. There is only one unit of the NWPS in this type. The Timbered Crater unit is not really typical of this realm and ecoregion. It is a lava field with scattered ponderosa pine growing in soil pockets widely scattered throughout the unit. There are other units in the NWPS that closely resemble the lava field in this unit. They are found nearby at Lassen National Park, Lava Beds NM and Thousand Lakes Wilderness on the Lassen National Forest.

Although the overall WSA is considered manageable, the two private inholdings located in the northern end of the WSA could cause a problem in the future. They are owned by a timber managing company. They have not indicated that they have any immediate intensive land management plans for the area.

In conclusion, the main reason that this WSA was recommended nonsuitable, was that its wilderness qualities are considered low. The area is roadless due to its rough lava field terrain. Other than its roadless condition, it is similar to much of the surrounding countryside. It is common to many other areas in Northern California that have lava flows.



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

-  SPLIT ESTATE
-  STATE
-  PRIVATE



**Timbered Crater
Proposal
MAP-1**



030-201
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)	17,896
Split Estate	(BLM surface only)	0
Inholdings		
State		0
Private		199
Total		18,095
<u>Within 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 Area Not Recommended for Wilderness</u>		<u>Acres</u>
BLM	(surface and subsurface)	17,896
Split Estate	(BLM surface only)	0
Total BLM Lands Not Recommended for Wilderness		17,896

3. CRITERIA CONSIDERED IN DEVELOPING THE WILDERNESS RECOMMENDATIONS

A. Wilderness Characteristics

1. Naturalness: This area is essentially natural in character due primarily to its harsh, rocky, and difficult to traverse terrain. The area is predominantly a lava flow with low ridges and depressions. There is a lot of exposed lava rock with very rough and uneven terrain. Some minor impacts detract from the natural appearance but are generally small in size and scattered around the WSA so that the overall impact on naturalness is negligible. There is an abandoned, flat, rock quarry in section 25, T. 39 N, R. 4 E. There are several short ways located in the WSA totaling approximately 5 miles in length. The longest one (2 miles) is in the southwest corner of the WSA. There has been some timber and firewood cut in the past around the perimeter of the WSA. A couple of firelines from past fires are also in the area, but are gradually disappearing through natural re-vegetation.
2. Solitude: The size of the area, the broken topography and the scattered brush and shrubs which provide screening, create opportunities for solitude in the WSA. Due to the rough terrain broken by the rough lava flows, few people visit the area. During hunting season the cherrystemmed roads that penetrate up to three miles into the WSA get some travel by hunters. During the

rest of the year only a few vehicles drive the cherrystemmed roads and ways. Timbered Crater, a low volcanic cone, is located just outside the WSA on its western boundary. Vehicles traveling around the road on its rim can be seen from most of the west side of the WSA. This is not a major distraction as there are usually only a few vehicles up there on a given day and several days could pass between visits to Timbered Crater.

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: The opportunities for primitive and unconfined recreation are limited in the WSA. Some hunting occurs but usually in association with the cherrystemmed roads and ways in the WSA. Due to the uneven, rough terrain with a lot of rough lava, most hunters do not get far from the roads and ways. There are no interesting destinations within the heart of the WSA. That with a lack of streams and springs does not provide a reason for people to hike in the rough, broken lava country. The Baker Cypress is located on the northern boundary of the WSA and is accessible by cherrystemmed road or way.
4. Special Features: The WSA contains the 1,148-acre Baker Cypress Natural Area. The Baker cypress (Cupressus bakeri), is a minor tree species with a distribution limited to a handful of sites in Northern California and Southern Oregon. It is not a threatened or Endangered Species, just a limited unusual species. The natural area is part of a 7,000-acre population which is the largest stand of Baker cypress to be found. The remainder of this stand is spread over adjacent private and Shasta Trinity National Forest lands. Smaller stands of Baker cypress are found scattered over the Sierra Cascade Mountain from Plumas County, California to Jackson County, Oregon. The trees are found on typically poorer soil such as basic igneous or serpentine soils. The Baker Cypress Natural Area was established to recognize the uniqueness of the species and preserve a portion of its habitat. It would also be available for any future scientific studies of the species.

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 17,896 acres of the Sierran Forest/Western Ponderosa Forest ecosystem. This WSA is not exactly typical of this ecosystem as the majority of the WSA is comprised of lava flow. There is currently one existing unit

of this ecotype in the NWPS. There are two other BLM Wilderness Study Areas of this ecotype. There are two other units in the NWPS with similar lava formation. These are Lassen National Park and Lava Beds National Monument.

TABLE 2 - Ecosystem Representation

Bailey-Kuchler Classification Province/PNV	<u>NWPS Areas</u>		<u>Other BLM Studies</u>	
	areas	acres	areas	acres
<u>NATIONWIDE</u>				
Sierran Forest/Western Ponderosa Forest	1	815	2	21,754
<u>CALIFORNIA</u>				
Sierran Forest/Western Ponderosa Forest	1	815	2	21,754

2. Expanding the opportunities for solitude or primitive recreation within a day's driving time (five hours) of major population centers: This WSA is within a five-hour drive of six major population centers. Table 3 summarizes the number and acreage of designated areas and other BLM study areas within a five-hour drive of the 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>				
Sacramento	46	5,001,817	87	2,479,541
Redding	14	1,236,503	11	344,633
Chico	16	1,286,873	13	430,822
Yuba City	44	4,951,805	85	2,459,500
<u>Nevada</u>				
Reno	39	4,647,230	175	6,904,809
<u>Oregon</u>				
Medford	31	2,440,081	21	730,038

3. Balancing the geographic distribution of wilderness areas: There are six existing units of the National Wilderness Preservation System within 50 air miles of the Timbered Crater WSA. These

areas are Lassen National Park wilderness, Lava Beds N.M., Caribou and Thousand Lakes wilderness in Lassen National Forest and Castle Crags and Mt. Shasta Wilderness in the Shasta Trinity National Forest. There is one other recommended suitable BLM WSA within 50 air miles of Timbered Crater.

C. Manageability

The entire WSA is manageable as wilderness. The 199 acres of private lands within the WSA could potentially cause manageability problems. The private lands are owned by Roseburg Lumber Company as part of their larger land holdings in the surrounding area. The lands are being managed for timber production. A cherrystemmed road approximately two miles long provides access to the private parcels. To date there has not been much intensive forest management activity on these parcels. If an activity such as intensive harvest or a plantation were to take place in the future, it could detract from the area's wilderness characteristics. Roseburg Lumber Company could ask for an improvement of the access road at some future date.

Some irregularly-shaped sections on the east and south boundaries could present some boundary management problems, as they are long, narrow peninsulas jutting into private land.

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 time of preliminary suitability recommendation: The Timbered Crater WSA is in the Alturas Resource Area. The U.S. Bureau of Mines and the U.S. Geological survey prepared a Mineral Land Assessment Report for the WSA (Peterson and Martin 1981). The report concludes that the area has little mineral potential except for flat lavas used in building construction. The geothermal potential of the area cannot be precisely determined except by further geological and geophysical study. However, the report considered the potential to be low.

Past leasing activity was considered speculative as four of six geothermal lease applications and two of three oil and gas lease applications have either been terminated due to non-payment or were withdrawn by the applicant(s).

Because of low potential for mineral resources, no mineral potential map was prepared for this WSA. Several permits for removal of flat rock were issued prior to 1970. Since this kind of material is readily available on private lands and the material available on public lands is limited and of low economic value, sale of flat rock from public lands was discontinued.

2. Summary of significant new mineral resource data collected since suitability recommendation which should be considered in the final recommendation: There has not been any significant new information that has come to the attention of the BLM since the EIS was written. All the geothermal lease applications have been relinquished and there are no geothermal leases now in the WSA. The last oil and gas lease was withdrawn by the applicant. There are no oil and gas lease applications in the WSA.

E. Impacts on Resources

TABLE 4 - Comparative Summary of the Impacts by Alternative

ISSUE-RELATED RESOURCES	PROPOSED ACTION NO-WILDERNESS/NO ACTION	ALL-WILDERNESS ALTERNATIVE	PARTIAL-WILDERNESS ALTERNATIVE
Impact on Wilderness Values	<p>The 20 percent of the area that is accessible to OHV would experience temporary disruptions of naturalness over much of its geographic extent from OHV use and such activities as timber harvesting, fuelwood harvesting, and the removal of flat lava rock. Within this area the disruption of naturalness would be relatively permanent on 10 acres per year from the removal of flat rock and would last about five years on an average of 25 acres per year from fuelwood and timber harvesting.</p> <p>Impacts on opportunities for solitude would be similar to those described for naturalness. Both naturalness and solitude would be preserved quite well on the 80 percent of the area that is inaccessible.</p> <p>Opportunities for primitive and unconfined recreation are limited in the WSA. They would re-</p>	<p>Wilderness values would be well protected under this alternative. Naturalness and opportunities for solitude would be reduced on less than 20 acres from wildlife guzzlers and development designated to prevent OHV use of the area. The limited existing opportunities for primitive and unconfined recreation would be retained and the special features of the WSA would be either unaffected or enhanced.</p>	<p>Under this alternative, wilderness values would be well protected on about 85 percent of the WSA. On the remaining 15 percent (the accessible portion of the area recommended non-suitable) impacts on naturalness and opportunities for solitude would be similar to those described for the Proposed Action except that none of the impacts would last more than about five years because there would be no removal of flat lava rock.</p> <p>The limited opportunities for primitive and unconfined recreation would be diminished slightly by the activities affecting naturalness (timber harvest, fuelwood harvest, guzzler installation, etc.) but those who want primitive camping experience for example, could easily find it by avoiding disturbed areas.</p>

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

ISSUE-RELATED RESOURCES	PROPOSED ACTION NO-WILDERNESS/NO ACTION	ALL-WILDERNESS ALTERNATIVE	PARTIAL-WILDERNESS ALTERNATIVE
Impact on Wilderness Values (Cont'd)	<p>main available, however, for those willing to avoid the above-mentioned disturbances or hike into the parts of the WSA that are inaccessible to CHVs.</p> <p>The geology of the area would not be impacted. Impacts on the other special features-the Baker-Cypress stand and archaeological sites-would be as described below for those issues.</p>		<p>The geology of the area would not be impacted. Impacts on the other special features-Baker Cypress stand and archaeological sites-would be as described below for those issues.</p>
Impacts on the Baker Cypress Stand	<p>Less than 10 individual trees would be damaged or destroyed by CHVs annually. This would be more than counterbalanced by a relatively high level of fire protection.</p>	<p>There would be no damage from CHVs, but a lower level of fire protection. Acquisition of inholdings would increase the percentage of the stand that could be protected to about 16 percent.</p>	<p>Impacts would be the same as under the Proposed Action.</p>
Impacts on Timber Harvesting	<p>There would be one timber sale of about 200 Mfb every 10 years and, by the year 2000, a fuelwood harvest of about 100 cords per year. Although this could be significant to individual local residents, it would not be significant in terms of the local economy.</p>	<p>There would be no timber or fuelwood harvesting within the WSA.</p>	<p>Impacts would be the same as under the Proposed Action, except that the harvest every 10 years would be reduced by 25 percent to 150 Mfb.</p>
Impacts on Recreational Use Levels	<p>There would be a minor increase in recreational use to about 2,300 visitor days per year.</p>	<p>Reduced recreational use due to the prohibition of CHVs would be partially offset by the attraction of a designated wilderness & increased game bird populations. The net result would be a 25 percent decline in recreational use to about 1,600 visitor days per year.</p>	<p>Impacts would be the same as under the All Wilderness Alternative, except that because of only partial elimination of CHV use, recreational use would only decline 10 percent to about 2,000 visitor days per year.</p>

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

ISSUE-RELATED RESOURCES	PROPOSED ACTION NO-WILDERNESS/NO ACTION	ALL-WILDERNESS ALTERNATIVE	PARTIAL-WILDERNESS ALTERNATIVE
Impact on Important Archaeological Sites	There would be moderate damage to at least one important archaeological site (known and unknown in the next 15 years), the largest threats being flat lava rock removal and OHV use.	The archaeological sites would be protected.	There would be negligible damage to one important but currently unknown archaeological site in the next 15 years. Known sites would be protected.
Impacts on Volume of Flat Lava Rock Removal	About 400 tons of flat lava rock would be removed each year. This would not be important to the local economy.	There would be no removal of flat lava rock from within the WSA.	There would be no removal of flat lava rock from within the WSA.

F. Local Social and Economic Considerations

No local social or economic impacts of any significance were identified in the Final Environmental Impact Statement.

G. Summary of WSA - Specific Comments

Public involvement has occurred throughout the wilderness review process. During the inventory phase some comments addressed the natural characteristics of the unit. Others had information about the location and use of roads and private lands within the WSA. The presence of old firebreaks was also mentioned. All of this information was used in the EIS.

During formal public review of the draft Alturas RMP EIS, a total of 35 comments specifically addressing wilderness or this WSA were received. Of these, 31 were written and 4 were oral statements received at the public hearing held in Redding, CA on July 20, 1983. In general, 30 respondents supported wilderness designation for all or part of the WSA. Five respondents supported no-wilderness for the WSA.

Those favoring wilderness mentioned the need for more wilderness to be preserved in general. Some specific references to this WSA mentioned the outstanding natural values, Baker cypress, deer winter range and protecting archaeological sites as reasons for designating the area as wilderness. Those opposing wilderness stated that they felt the area did not have the quality that warranted designation and the area should be left open for the full range of uses including mining and woodcutting.

The Environmental Protection Agency (EPA), Soil Conservation Service (SCS) and State of California Resources Agency all commented on the draft EIS. The EPA mentioned that water quality discussion was minimal which we explained was due to the lack of any projected future uses of the area that would affect water quality. The SCS mentioned that soils

information may be needed if erosion is a problem. The BLM responded by pointing out that there were no projected management actions that would cause erosion. The California Resources Agency mentioned that the Department of Parks and Recreation would eventually like to acquire 480 acres of land at the south end of the WSA under the Recreation and Public Purposes Act for addition to Ahjumawi-Lava Springs State Park. The BLM answered that this would be a possibility if Congress affirms this non-suitable recommendation.

No comments were received from the local governments.