

**The Nevada Mining Association's**  
***Lincoln County Wilderness Study Area***  
***Position Paper***

**A Review of Wilderness Study  
Areas in Lincoln County Nevada.**

**Part: 1 Lincoln County Land Use Patterns**

**Part: 2 Individual WSA's**

EXHIBIT E1 Wilderness

Document consists of 72 pages.



Entire document provided.

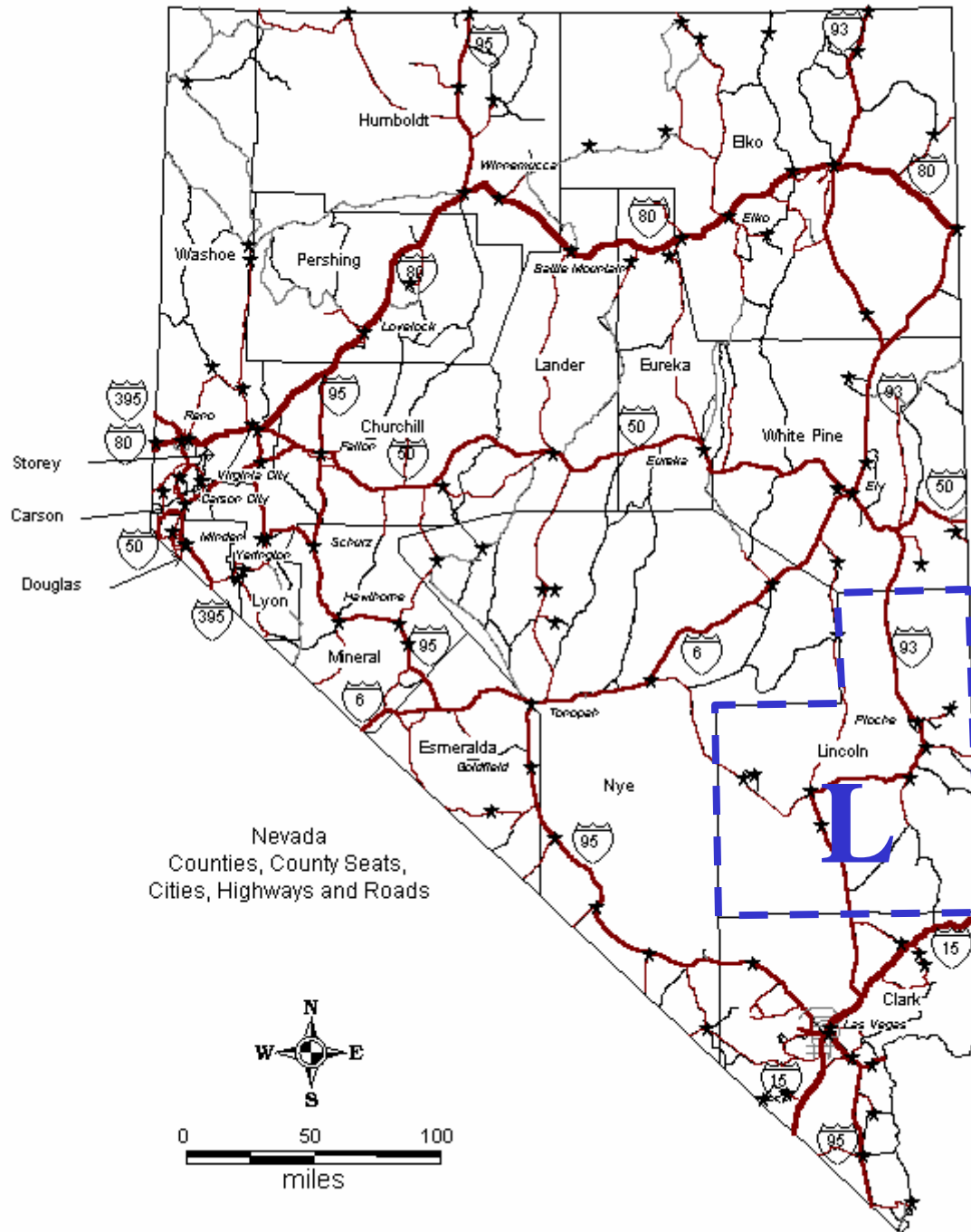


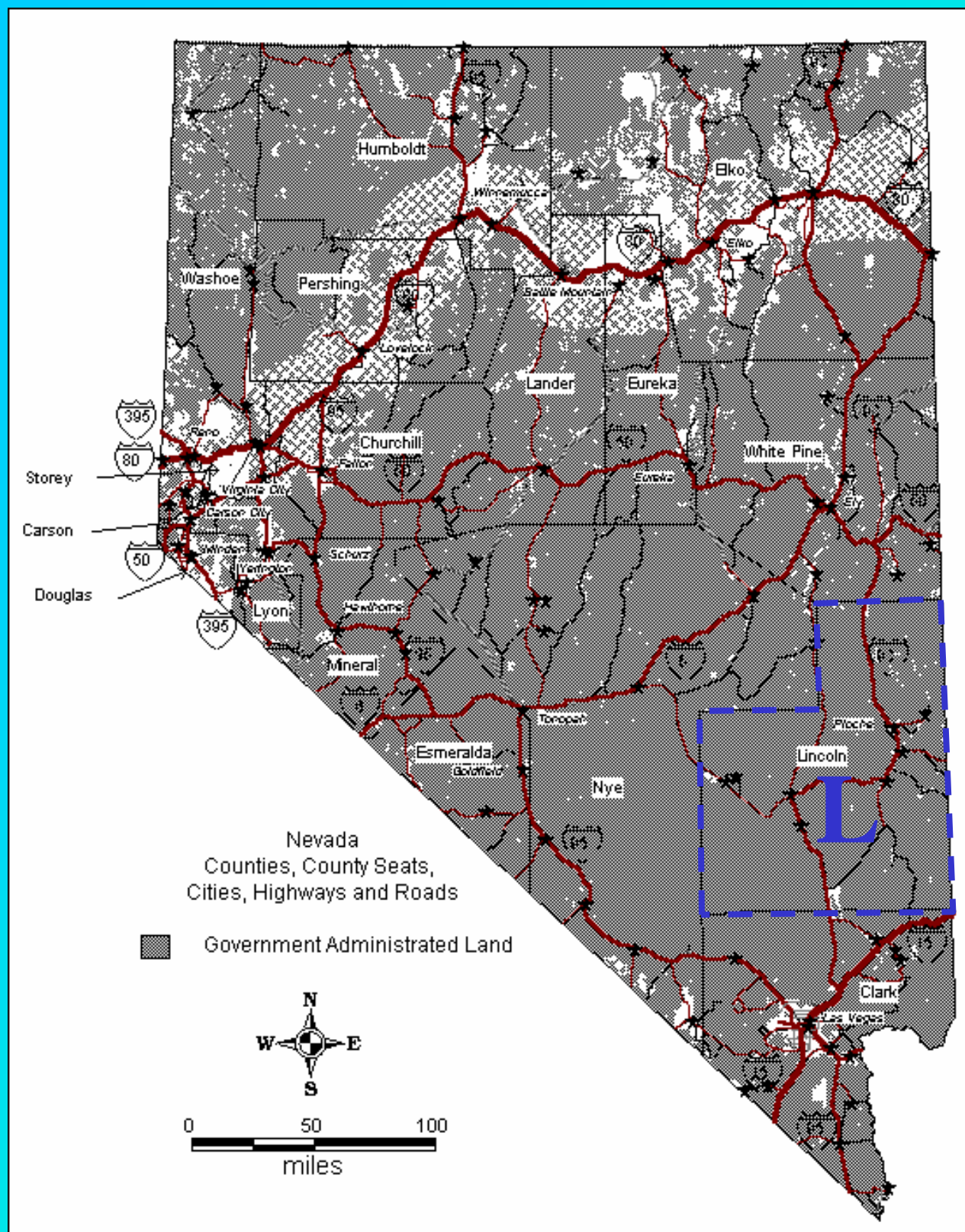
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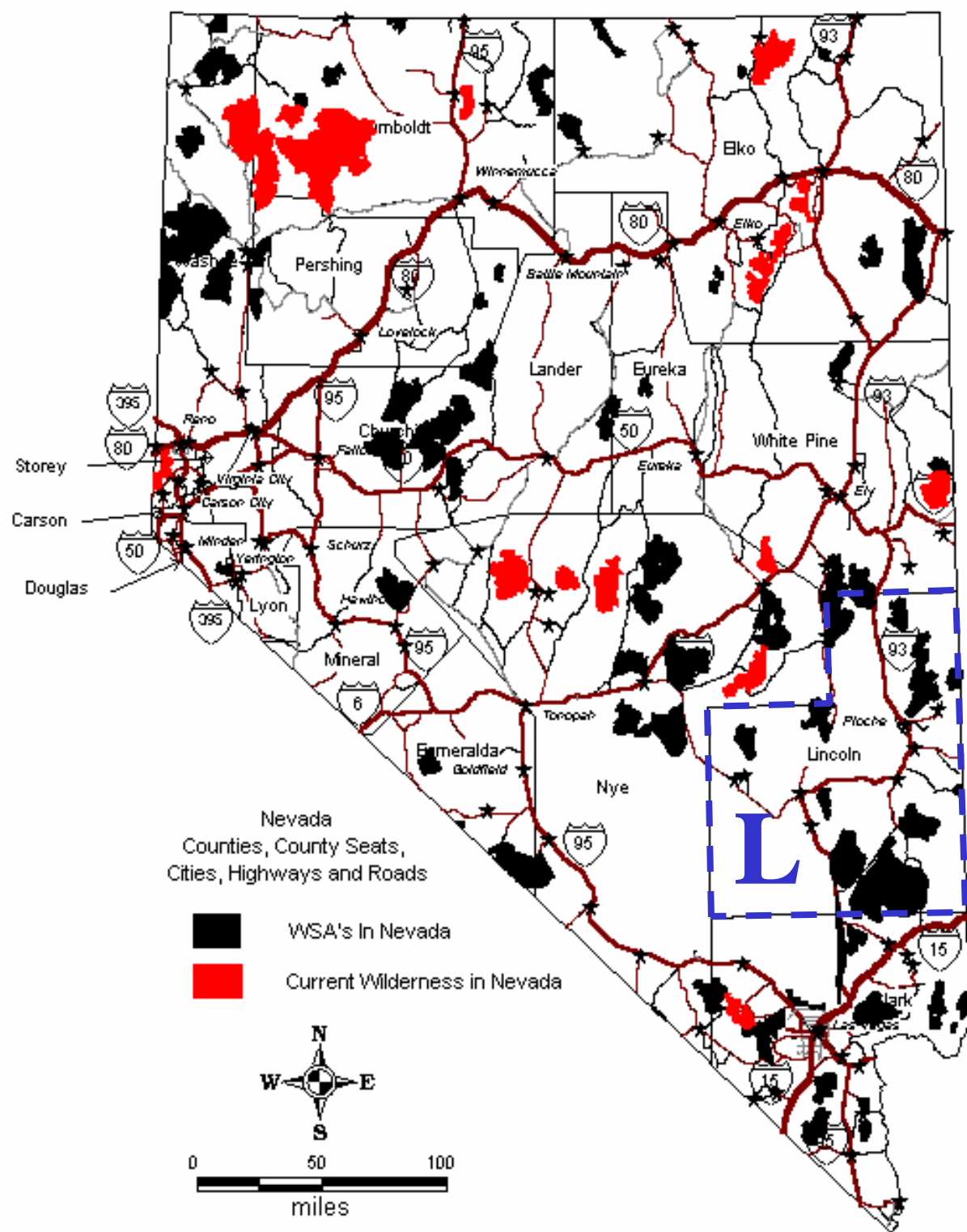
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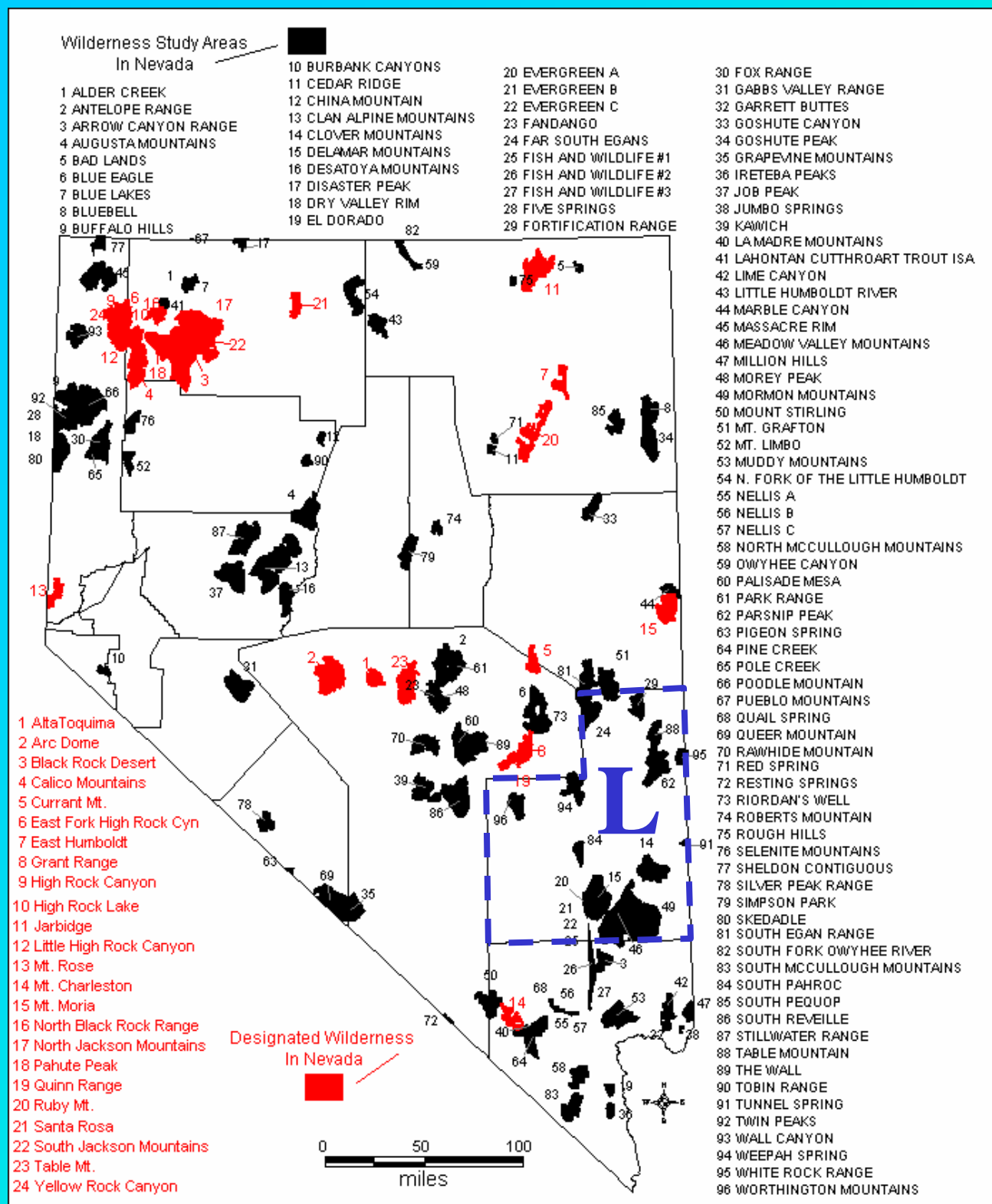
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# Lincoln County



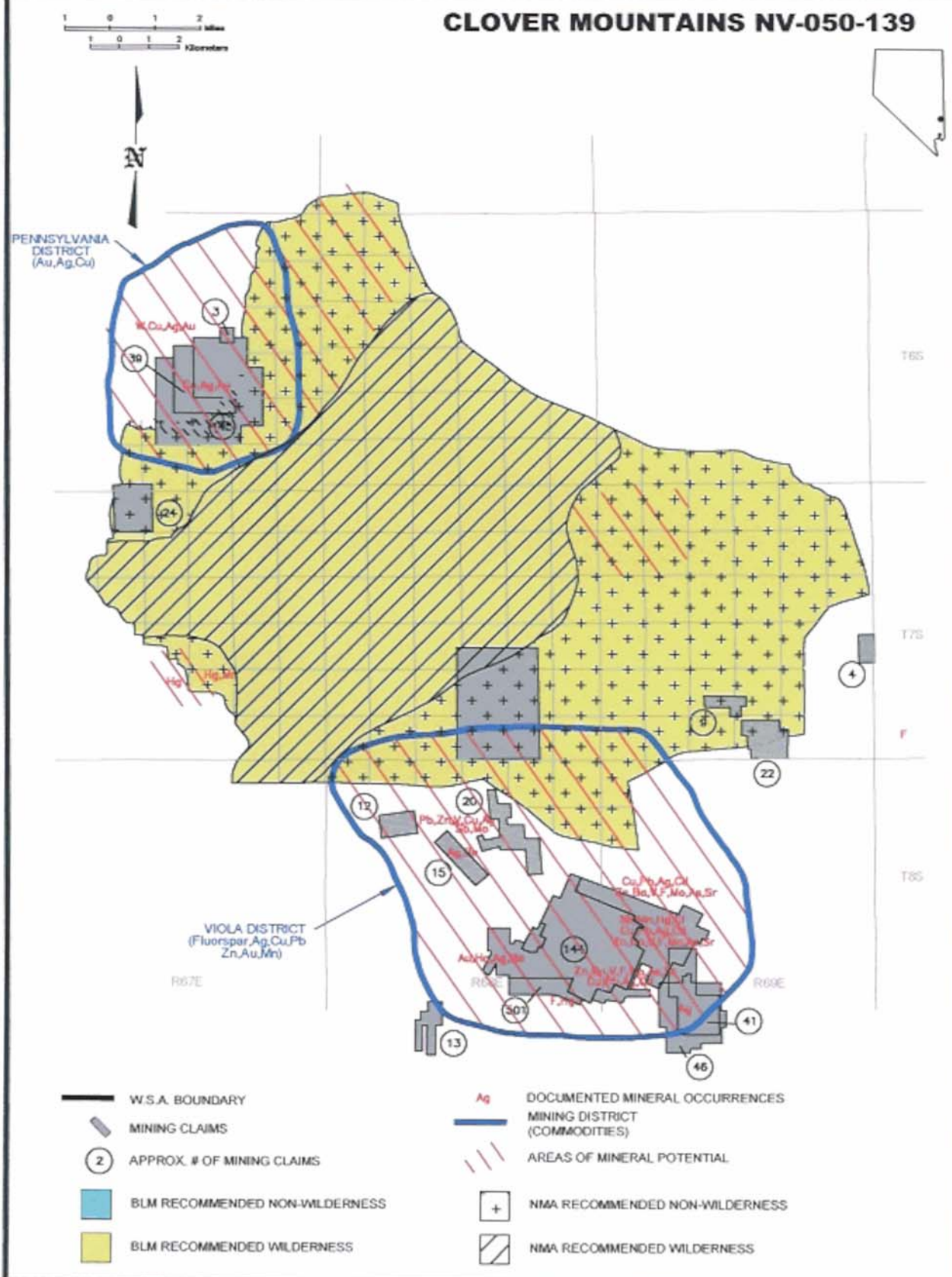








# CLOVER MOUNTAINS NV-050-139



## **CLOVER MOUNTAINS WILDERNESS STUDY AREA**

### **1. THE STUDY AREA - 84,935 acres**

The Clover Mountains WSA (NV-050-139) is located in southern Lincoln County, Nevada, approximately twelve miles south of Caliente, Nevada, in the western Clover Mountains. The WSA contains 84,935 acres of BLM land with no split estate lands or private inholdings. Along the southwest side, from the intersection of Pennsylvania Canyon and Meadow Valley Wash southerly, the boundary is formed by the Union Pacific Railroad tracks or the adjoining access road, whichever is more easterly, except for a tract of private land. At the private land, the boundary is formed by a combination of the private land and the access road. The southern boundary is formed by extending a line easterly from the midline of Section 3, T.8S., R.67E., approximately along a ridgeline, to the approximate center of Section 4, T.8S., R.68E., at map elevation 4,671'. From there the line extends southeasterly, point to point, to the northern slopes of Garden Mountain, thence northerly and easterly across the lower slopes of the Clover Mountains, point to point, to a point about one mile north of Sam's Camp Well. The boundary goes generally northerly and easterly to join the jeep road at East Setting Spring and follows the road up Quaking Aspen Canyon to its junction with the East Pass Road. At this junction, it turns west for some three miles, then forms a broad arc, northwesterly to north, roughly approximating the ridgelines between Sheep and Stokes Flats to the east and the Cottonwood Creek drainage to the west, to a peak mapped as 6,112' adjacent to Stokes Flat. Going point to point from there it extends northerly and westerly through peaks 6,289, 6,192 and 6,445, joining an unnamed jeep trail at its intersection with the range line between R.67 and R.68E and following the trail west to its juncture with the Ella Mountain Road, east-southeast of Ella Mountain Lookout. The ridgeline between Pine Creek and Pennsylvania Canyon is followed south to Peak 6,457' where a canyon bottom is followed, leading to the southwest from the peak, and eventually west to Pennsylvania Canyon. The road in Pennsylvania Canyon is followed, south to the intersection with the access road along the railroad in Meadow Valley Wash. From there south to the point of origin at the north boundary of the private lands, it follows the access road.

### **2. RECOMMENDATION AND RATIONALE - 84,875 acres recommended for wilderness**

#### **60 acres recommended for nonwilderness**

Wilderness designation is recommended for 84,875 acres of public land within the Clover Mountains WSA because the area is natural and provides outstanding opportunities for both solitude and primitive and unconfined recreation. **In the preferred alternative analyzed in the FEIS, the bulk of the 770 acres not recommended for wilderness designation were adjacent to the Pennsylvania Mining District and were heavily encumbered by mining claims. Although geochemical analysis did not bear out the claimants optimism, the potential manageability problems attendant in these claims, in concert with the relatively lower wilderness values, were resolved by excluding this area from the wilderness recommendation. Subsequent records checks showed that these claims no longer exist and therefore, an additional 710 acres are now recommended for wilderness.** (Bolded information is included because it was the rationale for the recommendation, however it is no longer accurate.

Royal Standard Minerals re-staked these claims in 1996 and plans to conduct exploratory drilling during spring of 1997 in locations outside the WSA). An area of sixty acres in a strip adjacent to the access road and railroad tracks on the WSA's west side remains recommended for nonwilderness uses as in the FEIS.

Conflicts with other resources in the area recommended for wilderness are virtually nonexistent. Grazing use will be allowed to continue. The portion of the WSA not recommended for wilderness, approximately 60 acres, is confined to a narrow strip alongside the railroad and its access road where nonimpairment would be difficult to maintain and the additional space may be needed for realignment and parking for WSA visitors.

### **3. WILDERNESS CHARACTERISTICS**

**A. Naturalness:** This WSA is substantially natural with minor and localized evidence of man. An historic homesite in Cottonwood Canyon remains along with traces of the flood damaged way into it. Cattle use has broken down stream banks and created trails in Pine and Ash Creeks. The area immediately adjacent to the Pennsylvania Mining District is influenced by moderate activity in the district but the effect is minimized by vegetative and topographic screening. The area adjacent to the railroad and access road in Meadow Valley Wash is subjected to influences from these features but the effect is minimized by the steep cliffy terrain of the WSA in Meadow Valley Wash. The railroad has conducted emergency maintenance within the Cottonwood Canyon wash nearly 1000 feet inside the WSA in recent years. There is also a cement lining in that wash extending nearly 1300 feet into the WSA which existed prior to 1976 but was not reported in the wilderness inventory. The remainder of the WSA is unaffected by human imprints. The large drainages included within the unit are very much isolated from external human influences. On the east, extensive heavy stands of pinyon-juniper and incised terrain provide an extremely natural aspect. The remainder of the WSA, on its northwestern side and not recommended for wilderness, is unimpacted by man.

**B. Solitude:** Opportunities for solitude are outstanding within this WSA. Its large size, lack of narrow protrusions, topographic relief and vegetation all contribute to its solitude. The sharp relief from Meadow Valley Wash eastward into the unit isolates it from the Wash and activities there. In the interior, narrow twisting canyons, cliffs, rock outcrops, peaks, ridges and saddles provide excellent separation within the unit. On the lower region, topographic expression is less but still provides about fifty percent topographic screening. Vegetation is moderate to heavy over much of the unit except in the lower south facing slopes. Screening due to vegetation is strong nearly everywhere except in the lower areas. Secluded spots are easily located almost anywhere in the unit and solitude is rated as outstanding.

**C. Primitive and Unconfined Recreation:** Primitive and unconfined recreation opportunities are outstanding due both to the quality and variety of the activities. Day-hiking, backpacking, climbing and scrambling, nature study, photography and horseback riding are all outstanding. Hunting for mule deer is good. The varied topography, vegetation and features create numerous routes, trip lengths and challenges.



#### 4. MANAGEABILITY

The entire WSA and additional areas to complete the watershed are eminently manageable as wilderness for the long term. The area is a solid block of federal land with no inholdings or rights-of-way. No mining claims are present. Some ORVs occasionally penetrate part way up Cottonwood Canyon and thereby gain access to the canyon as well as the southern portion of the WSA, but the railroad tracks preclude all but the most determined from reaching the canyon's mouth. Control is possible for nearly all ORV penetration because of the terrain and vegetation which preclude off-road travel except for some portions of the southern end. All of the area was leased post-FLPMA for oil and gas, but no activity, even seismic data gathering, has taken place and the leases have been terminated.

The area is readily manageable over the long term as wilderness due to its steep bordering terrain and limited number of entry points for vehicles. Some ORV use is evident along the old way in Cottonwood Creek but the presence of the railroad physically controls most of this at the canyon mouth and periodic flooding is reclaiming the wash. The area could be expanded, to provide a more logical and easily identified boundary, by extending the boundary on the northeastern side in the Fife Canyon vicinity and on the northwestern side, to coincide with the watershed divide in both instances. This would greatly enhance manageability of the Cottonwood Creek area. A limited portion of the area adjacent to the Pennsylvania Mining district may be a little more difficult to manage due to activity on the district, flatter terrain, and because of the proximity of access roads.

#### 4. ENERGY AND MINERAL RESOURCE VALUES

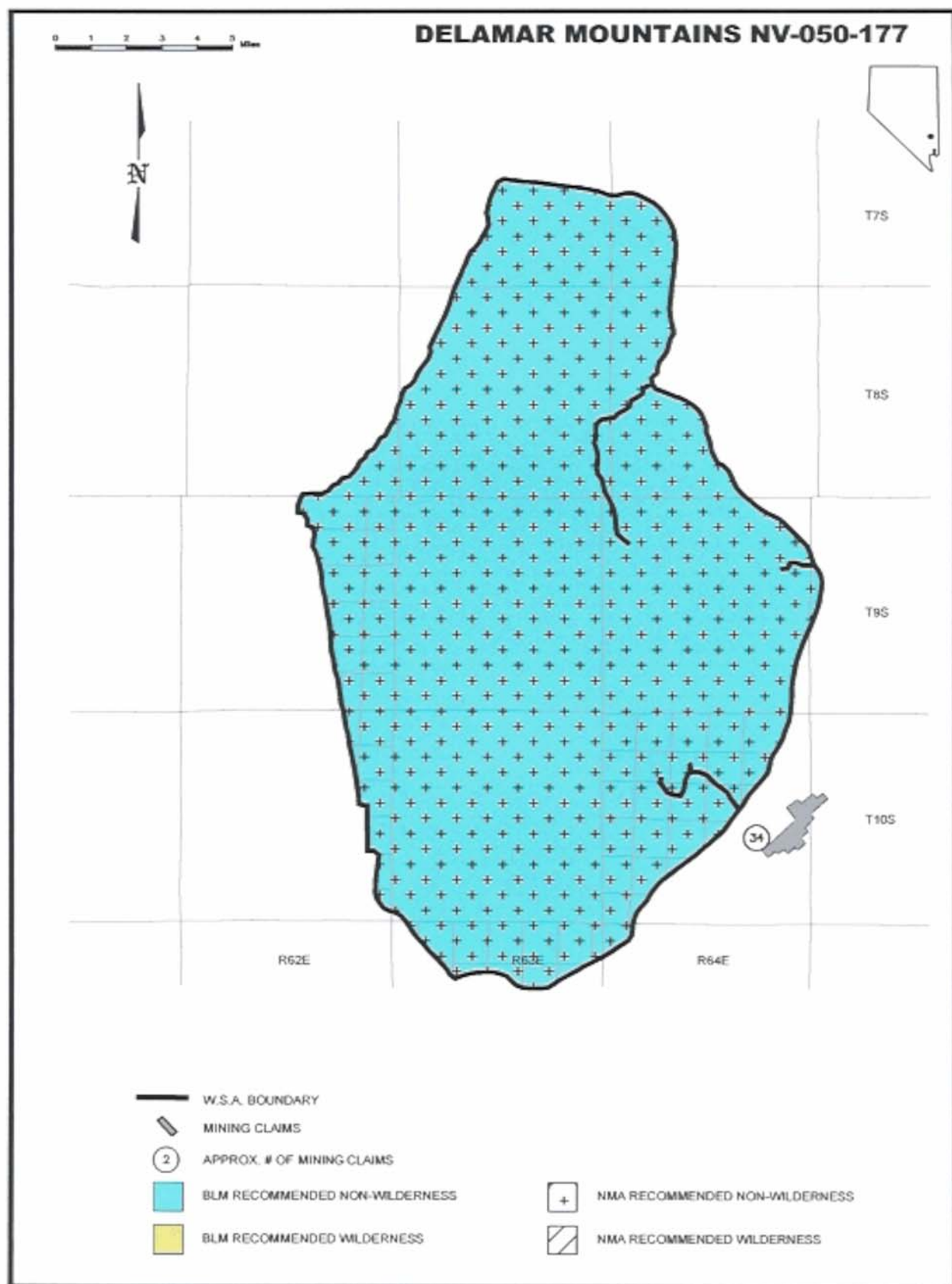
There are no identified mineral resources inside the WSA. Two parts of the WSA have moderate potential for molybdenum. A large portion of the southern part of the WSA area has low mineral resource potential for gold, silver, oil, gas and zeolite mineral resources. A small area outside of and adjacent to the western boundary of the WSA has low potential for gold and silver. Stone, sand and gravel along the Meadow Valley Wash portion of the WSA would have a limited market for use on the railroad and the accompanying access road. There are no oil and gas leases in the WSA as of March 10, 1989 and the area will remain closed to leasing until the wilderness status is determined. **The mining claims located in the northwestern corner of the WSA and for which the boundary of the area recommended for wilderness was adjusted, have been determined "void by law" due to lack of assessment work.** (These claims have since been re-staked.) Mining claims have been filed on the far western side of the WSA in 1986 and 1987 and assessment work was filed September 21, 1988. As of March 10, 1989, there were no other mining claims within the WSA. Two mining districts lie outside and near the WSA boundary on the northwest and south. Although both had rather limited production, their presence has sparked speculation that similar deposits may be concealed under the thick volcanic cover of the WSA. Claims exist only in a small area on the WSA's western edge. In addition to the previously discussed abandoned claims on the WSA's northwestern side, a large block of molybdenum claims held by a major company was abandoned in the south-central portion of the unit. Available data indicate no marketable mineral deposits are present. The U.S. Geological Survey Bulletin 1729-D identifies two areas, one in the northern tip and one in the Coldwater Creek drainage as having moderate potential for molybdenum. Much of the southern portion of the area has low potential for gold, silver, zeolite, oil and gas.

Scattered sand, stone, and gravel resources exist with the most readily accessible sites along Meadow Valley Wash and in lower Cottonwood Creek. Due to remoteness, they are of local interest only.

#### **6. SUMMARY OF WSA-SPECIFIC PUBLIC COMMENTS**

During formal public review of the draft EIS, a total of 156 written and 5 oral comments specifically addressing this WSA were received. In general, 151 individuals who commented supported more wilderness designation than the preferred alternative, 3 supported the preferred alternative and 7 supported less. Most comments which specifically mentioned the WSA and supported wilderness designation touch on exceptionally high wilderness values, important wildlife habitat, cultural resource values, significant vegetation, colorful rocks, open basins, narrow canyons and the rare opportunity to preserve all, or nearly all, of a flowing desert stream system. Comments opposing wilderness centered around speculative mineral resource potential and potential impacts to energy and mineral exploration and development

The U.S. Bureau of Mines recommended, in responding to the DEIS, that the border be drawn inward between a mile and three miles along the WSA's western and southwestern boundaries to exclude areas of postulated mineral resources. The EPA noted that the Environmental Consequences chapter should address the water quality impacts for protection of sensitive areas of the Clover Mountain WSA stream. The State opposed wilderness designation on the basis of its feeling that mineral values were higher than indicated in the DEIS and in the draft FEIS and that management of important mule deer habitat would be precluded by wilderness designation.



## **DELAMAR MOUNTAINS WILDERNESS STUDY AREA**

### **1. THE STUDY AREA - 126,257 acres**

Delamar Mountains Wilderness Study Area (WSA), NV-050-177, consists of the southern extension of the Delamar Mountain Range, is approximately 205 square miles, and is located in southern Lincoln County, seventy-five miles north of Las Vegas and approximately fifteen miles southeast of Alamo. Roughly rectangular in shape, the WSA is 3 to 13 miles east to west, and 23 miles north to south. The western border is located along a power line and unpaved roads, from its northwest corner, south to its juncture with Highway 93. It follows Highway 93 and old Highway 93 to another unpaved road on the south which eventually terminates, and the boundary goes on to meet Kane Springs County road. It follows the Kane Springs road for several miles, breaking off to follow an older road about one and one-third miles north of the Willow Springs road, continues on the road as it turns into the Delamar Mountains in a major drainage. The road and boundary continue northward through Gregerson Basin and around the north end of the unit to the northwestern corner. One long cherry stem penetrates from the northeast towards the unit's center and two shorter ones enter on the southwest.

### **2. RECOMMENDATION AND RATIONALE - 0 acres recommended for wilderness 126,257 acres recommended for nonwilderness**

The recommendation for this WSA is not to designate the study area as wilderness and to release the entire area for uses other than wilderness. BLM's decision not to recommend the Delamar Mountains WSA for wilderness designation is based upon a determination of potential resource conflicts and manageability concerns including an inability to recommend a boundary that would be easily identified, manageable, and clearly recognizable to the user public. A lack of physical barriers to limit the incursion of off-highway vehicles into the WSA weighed heavily in the recommendation for this WSA. Although the entire area could be managed as wilderness, the resources that would be required to ensure the integrity of the boundary and the management of an area of marginal wilderness values would be cost prohibitive and could not be effectively enforced. Topographic configuration of the WSA is such that most areas of the WSA are easily accessed from the cherry stemmed road and range improvements located deep in the center of the study area or up Bomber Wash from the south. Nevada Department of Wildlife has proposed placing up to eight upland game bird water developments in the bottom of Bomber Wash. Development of these projects would encourage vehicle access deep into any area that would be recommended as wilderness. Slopes in the central portion of the WSA are such that they pose little impediment to off-road travel.

The highest quality wilderness values are in the Bomber Canyon area and along the periphery of the study area where solitude can be found. However, the majority of the study area exhibits a lack of quality wilderness values throughout a large portion of the WSA, the key consideration in the BLM's recommendation. While the WSA contained the wilderness values necessary for study, they are not considered to be of a quality and continuity throughout the WSA to merit the area's inclusion in the National Wilderness Preservation System (NWPS). The WSA generally appears natural but the aggregate affects of gradual incursion of human activity and resource development around the perimeter and core of the study area and the potential impacts in Bomber Wash and sights and sounds adjacent to highway 93, combine to reduce the area where a quality recreation experience can be gained to a small "H" or "U" shaped configuration near the top of the mountains. Opportunities for solitude are extremely limited on the west side of the WSA due to the severe slope of the range and visibility to U.S. Highway 93.



### **3. WILDERNESS CHARACTERISTICS**

**A. Naturalness:** The Delamar Mountains WSA is sixty-five to seventy percent natural with negligible human imprints except in certain areas. The area ranges from relatively featureless to very rugged and enclosed. With the exception of hunter access and water hauling for cattle, the area is currently seldom used by man. With the exception of the terrain exposed to Highway 93, the overall influence of human imprints on the area's naturalness is negligible. The WSA contains two reservoirs, ten quail guzzlers, a five-mile bladed cherry stem road to one of the reservoirs, a three-mile cherry stem to Willow Springs, a one and a half mile cherry stem on the east and several ways. Affecting naturalness are the cherry stem to Pony Well, Highway 93 and the power line corridor. Low level military jet aircraft over flights often occur.

**B. Solitude:** Several deep twisting canyons that issue from the central core region and into the southern bajada offer outstanding topographic screening provided by the cliffs and deeply eroded side drainages. Bomber Wash offers outstanding topographic screening. Topographic screening is outstanding in portions of the eastern mountainous region due to the numerous hills, peaks, washes, and draws. Topographic screening in the plateau core area is severely limited. There is limited topographic screening provided by the cliff and bajada along the west side although this area does offer some topographic relief if actively sought by visitors. The southern and eastern bajada areas offer limited topographic screening, provided by the shallow washes and low hills found adjacent to the uplands of the WSA. The desert shrubs, mixed with a small open stand of pinyon/juniper, provide minimal vegetative screening through much of the WSA. The large size of the WSA increases opportunities for solitude. The majority of the WSA is isolated from outside influences with the exception of the Pony Reservoir cherry stem road and the random aircraft over flights which destroy one's sense of aloneness.

**C. Primitive and Unconfined Recreation:** The WSA lends itself to all types of primitive recreational opportunities, however, some precautions must be undertaken to ensure water is available in order to allow for any extended time periods. The size of the unit and the topographic diversity make these recreational opportunities range from low to outstanding. Most portions of the study area could be used for day hiking, although long bajada areas would not be particularly attractive. Some of the long twisting canyons opening to the south, including most notably, Bomber Wash are likely routes. Many of the canyon areas and some of the boundary zones have rather spectacular cliffs which provide an attraction. In the canyons, these cliffs provide a sense of enclosure and isolation as well. On the north, a large northeasterly trending canyon makes an attractive hiking route. The higher peaks in the central and eastern portions are good destinations and provide expansive views of the Sheep Range, Pahrangat Valley, Meadow Valley Range, Mormon Mountains, Kane Springs Valley and beyond.

Large portions of the area lend themselves to various types of scrambling and climbing due to the steepness and rocky terrain. Opportunities for good photography of high, rugged, plateau type rock formations, rugged cliffs and Joshua trees are available throughout much of the WSA. The opportunity to observe and photograph desert bighorn sheep is possible. Hunting opportunities are limited for anything but scattered upland bird shooting. Due to the lack of water, horseback riding would likely be limited to the east portion out of Gregerson Basin.

**4. MANAGEABILITY** Two key management concerns affecting the Delamar WSA are vehicle access control and the paralleling utility corridor external to the WSA's western boundary. Terrain in the north portion of the study area makes it accessible to vehicular travel where casual and random use currently occurs. Access of the Pony Reservoir Road and Gregerson Basin Road provides ample opportunity to leave the known routes. Closing the existing ways and controlling this random travel would be nearly impossible. Access along the west side of the WSA does not appear to be much of a problem. Casual and random use has occurred up several washes, but the terrain does not lend itself to ready access. All washes and most of the terrain in the south and east are accessible to vehicular travel. Little evidence of use exists on the ground. Access along the east side is restricted to the boundary road and the short way leading to the stock reservoir. The BLM has been ordered by settlement of litigation to provide a permanent water in the pasture encompassing the Pony Well cherry stem road. A well was unsuccessful and some other means such as a pipeline or catchment may be necessary to accomplish the requirement. This may or may not cause some manageability problems, depending upon whether installations could be confined to the cherry stem road.

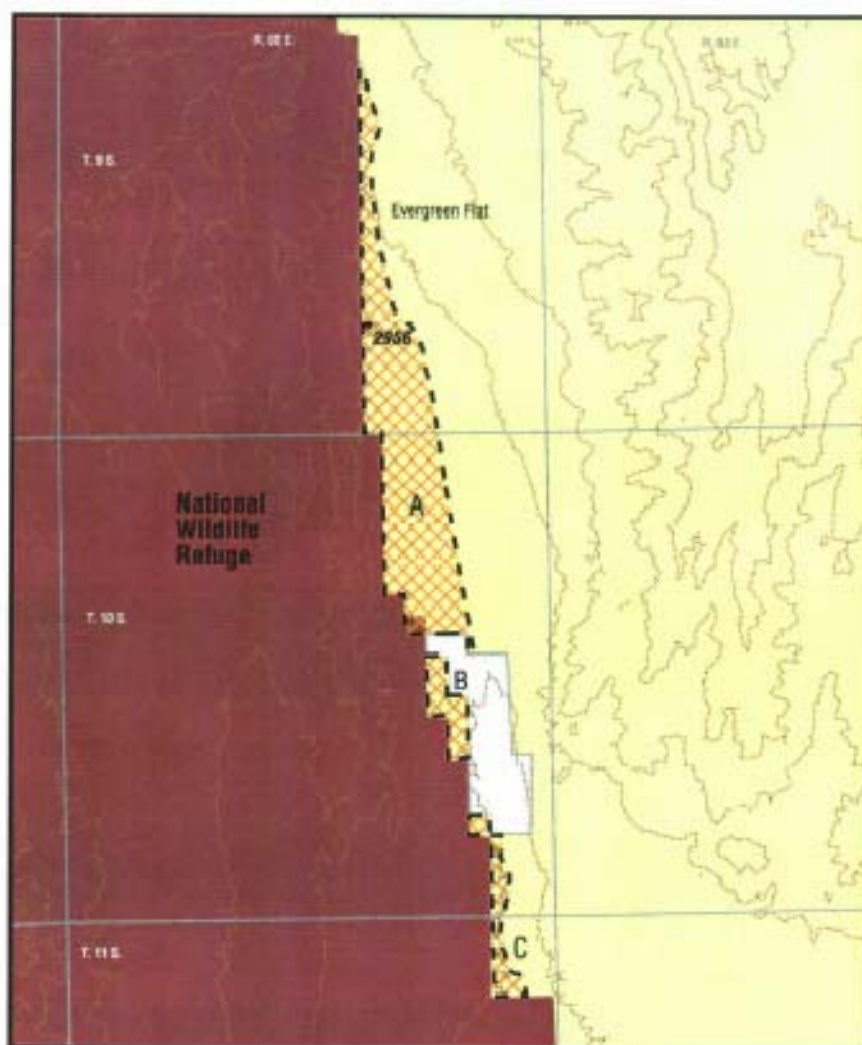
#### **5. ENERGY AND MINERAL RESOURCE VALUES**

No known locatable, strategic or critical mineral resources are known to occur in or near this WSA. Due to discoveries of mineralized areas in similar rock types in the northern part of the Delamar Range and elsewhere, the possibility of undiscovered resources exists. The salable mineral potential in this WSA is insignificant because material sites and free use areas are plentiful along roads and highways near the WSA. There are no known leasable mineral values present within this WSA, although the entire unit is under oil and gas leases. No major conflicts are foreseen and no strategic minerals are known to occur in the WSA.

#### **6. SUMMARY OF WSA-SPECIFIC PUBLIC COMMENTS**

During formal public review of the draft EIS, a total of 158 comments specifically addressing this WSA were received. Of those, 150 were written and 8 were oral statements received at the public hearing on the draft EIS. In general, 150 commentators supported wilderness designation for all or part of the WSA. Eight commentators supported the BLM preferred alternative, not to recommend the Delamar WSA for wilderness designation. The Governors consensus review, December 28, 1984, concurred with the BLM's recommendation not to designate the Delamar WSA because of the "many resource conflicts." The Department of Energy, Western Area Power Administration observed that planned transmission lines in the corridor adjacent to the west side of the Delamar Mountains WSA would be greatly restricted if full wilderness status was designated, therefore, they support the Preferred Alternative. Los Angeles Department of Water and Power also identified conflicts with the WSA and potential rights-of-way adjacent to the study area. The U.S. Environmental Protection Agency observed that "Criteria for selecting suitable versus unsuitable wilderness areas within the Delamar Mountains ... were not clear in the DEIS. This is particularly true when the Preferred Alternative (p. 2-2 to 2-4) and the Wilderness Accent Alternative (p.2-6 to 2-8) are compared." The Environmental Protection Agency recommended reevaluation of the Delamar WSA "since mineral resources are speculative, except for sand, gravel and perlite, (sic) and ORV use has a potential to be managed to some degree".

# Evergreen A, B, C Wilderness Study Area MINERAL POTENTIAL



1 0 1 Miles  
CONTOUR INTERVAL 200 METERS ( 656 FEET )

NO HIGH OR MEDIUM MINERAL POTENTIAL IS IDENTIFIED ON THIS MAP.

BLM  
 Private Land  
 Other Agency

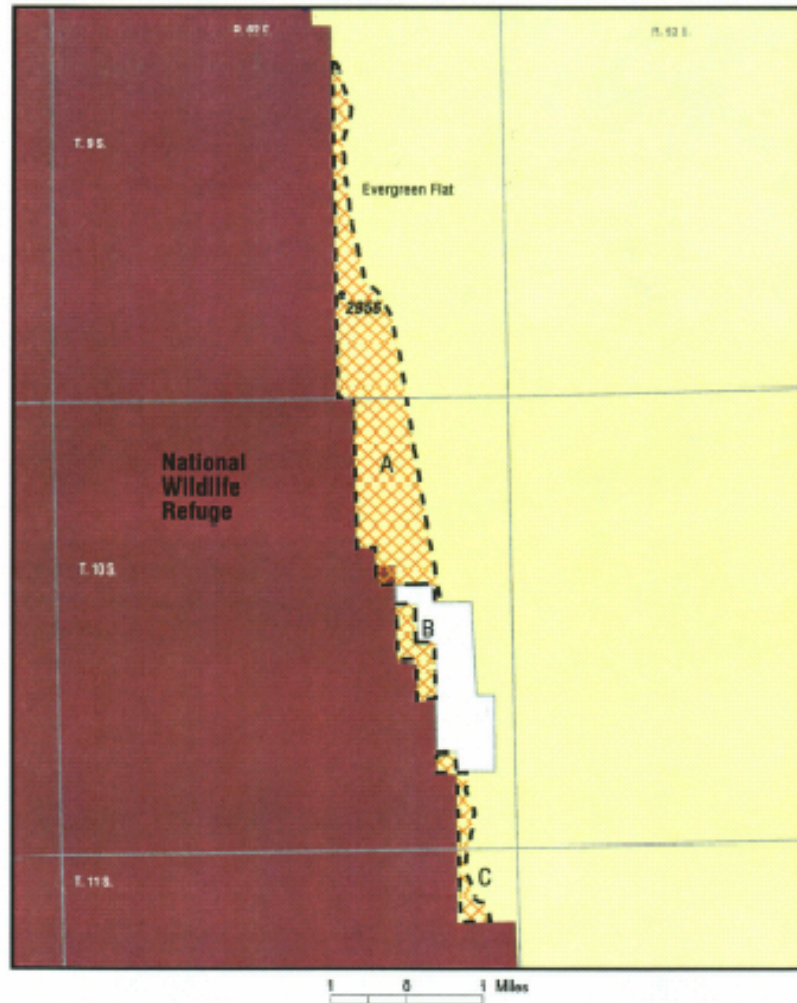
- - Wilderness Study Area Boundary  
 Recommended Non-Suitable



NV-050-1R-16

3/13/00

### Evergreen A, B, C Wilderness Study Area MINING CLAIM DENSITY AND OPERATIONS



NO MINING CLAIMS OR OPERATIONS ON THIS MAP

BLM  
Private Land  
Other Agency

-- Wilderness Study Area Boundary  
XXXX Recommended Non-Suitable





## **EVERGREEN ABC WILDERNESS STUDY AREA**

### **1. THE STUDY AREA - 2,694 acres**

The Evergreen ABC WSA (NV-050-01R-16) is in Lincoln County, Nevada, approximately 85 miles north of Las Vegas. Located a few miles south of Alamo, Nevada and the Pahrnagat Wildlife Refuge, the WSA is sandwiched between the Desert National Wildlife Range to the west and U.S. Highway 93 on the east. Evergreen ABC is composed of three small sub-areas separated by private lands. Sub-area A is 2,194 acres, sub-area B is 289 acres and sub-area C is 211 acres. A combined total of 2,694 acres (Table 1). Sub-part A is approximately seven miles long and up to one mile in width; B is a little over a mile long and one-half mile wide; C is two miles long by one half mile wide. All the sub-areas are long and narrow in form. The WSA is contiguous to the Desert National Wildlife Range along its west side. Section A's northern boundary is defined by a major drainage which intersects a road. The area's eastern boundary follows the road south for approximately 3 miles until it intersects a power line right-of-way and then is identified as the west right-of-way boundary of the power line. Section A is bordered to the south by a parcel of private land. Section B's northern and eastern boundaries are defined by private property. The southern portion of Section B is contiguous with the Desert National Wildlife Range. Private property defines Section C's northern border. The eastern border follows a road which intersects the Desert National Wildlife Range at the WSA's southern boundary.

### **2. RECOMMENDATION AND RATIONALE - 0 acres recommended for wilderness 2,694 acres recommended for nonwilderness**

The recommendation for this WSA is to release all 2,694 acres for uses other than wilderness. The lack of wilderness values, the area's small size and the elimination of conflicts with potential utility developments were the key considerations in the recommendation. The WSA generally appears natural. Outstanding opportunities for solitude and primitive recreation are lacking due to the topographic and physical configuration of the WSA. The area's small size limits opportunities for solitude as there are few if any secluded locales. Visitors would frequently encounter one another due to the area's restrictive size and lack of topographic features. Outstanding opportunities for primitive types of recreation are unavailable as interesting destinations and focal points of interest are absent from the study area. The no wilderness recommendation for the WSA emphasizes making the area available for utility development. Urban expansion and growth of Las Vegas Valley has sparked the need for utility expansion. Resource value for potential development of utilities outweighs the area's limited wilderness values. Over the long-term, naturalness values within the WSA could be diminished by increased motorized recreational activity and development of potential utilities. Desert tortoise (*Gopherus agassizii*), a special feature identified in the area, would not receive the added protection afforded from wilderness designation.

### **3. WILDERNESS CHARACTERISTICS**

**A. Naturalness:** The WSA is primarily in a natural condition. The WSA is a broad, easterly sloping bajada with numerous small draws and washes. Two small stock reservoirs are within the northern portion, sub-part A. The most prominent visible man-made features are outside the WSA (highway, power line, roads) along the area's eastern boundary.

**B. Solitude:** The WSA does not possess outstanding opportunities for solitude. The WSA's extremely small size, low-growing vegetation and flat easterly sloping topography provides minimal screening and virtually no secluded spots for experiencing solitude.

**C. Primitive and Unconfined Recreation:** The study area offers limited opportunities for horseback riding, hiking and nature study as the WSA's extremely small size limits movement. Few interesting locales and interesting features are located within the WSA that would draw visitors to the area to participate in primitive recreational experiences. At best, the area would be used for access into the Desert National Wildlife Range.

**D. Special Features:** The desert tortoise (*Gopherus agassizii*), listed by the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service as a threatened species on April 2, 1990, has been identified within the WSA. In 1988, a habitat management plan for the tortoise was adopted by the BLM. It calls for the categorization of their habitat by management goals. On August 4, 1989, the desert tortoise was listed, for 240 days, as an endangered species under emergency listing rules and subsequently was permanently listed as threatened on April 2, 1990.

**4. MANAGEABILITY** The entire study area is not capable of being managed as wilderness. Approximately 30 acres consisting of a material site right-of-way was issued in perpetuity to the Nevada Department of Transportation. Full utilization of the right-of-way is expected to occur. Extraction of sand and gravel from the site would negatively impact natural values in the WSA. There would be management concerns dealing with the WSA's small size and ORV accessibility.

### **5. ENERGY AND MINERAL RESOURCE VALUES**

No known metallic or nonmetallic mineral deposits exist within the WSA as the geologic conditions are not favorable for the accumulation of these minerals. As of the date of this report, no mine, prospects, or mining claims have been identified within the WSA. The exploration for any potential locatable minerals is not projected for the study area. Sand and gravel deposits may occur in the alluvial deposits, but no commercial value is anticipated. The study area has moderate potential for the occurrence of oil and gas because of its position with respect to the Overthrust Belt and sedimentary basin concept. To date, no wells have been drilled, nor has geophysical exploration been conducted within the WSA. Exploration for, or development of, potential energy resources is not projected to occur within the study area. Presently no oil and gas or geothermal leases exist within the WSA.

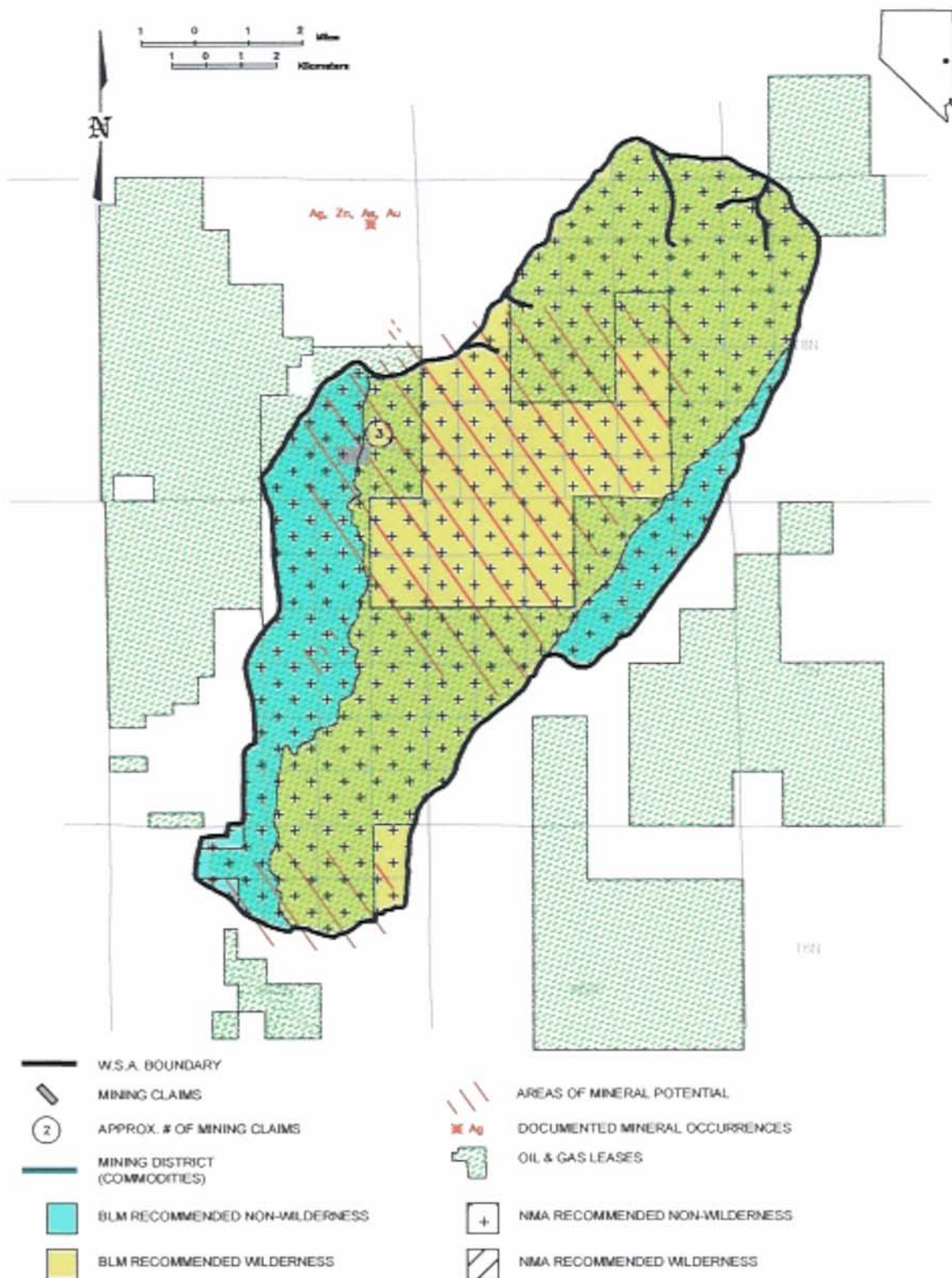
In summary, quantities of various mineral or energy resources are unknown, but the potential for occurrence for oil and gas is moderate throughout the WSA.

## **6. SUMMARY OF WSA-SPECIFIC PUBLIC COMMENTS**

In 1986, the area was reinstated in the wilderness study process as a result of an April 1985 decision in *Sierra Club vs. Watt* concerning certain lands that were deleted from wilderness review in 1982 and 1983. As a result of the court case, the area was reinventoried to document wilderness characteristics. One public comment was received pertaining to the decision of the original inventory of the WSA. The comment disagreed with the decision that the area be approved as a Wilderness Study Area. Comments cited that the area lacked opportunities for solitude and primitive recreation.

Two public hearings were held during the public review period on the Draft Nevada Contiguous Lands Wilderness EIS. The first was in Las Vegas, Nevada, on August 3, 1988. Oral statements were presented by 22 people. Six oral statements were presented at the second hearing at Reno, Nevada on August 4, 1988. None of the oral comments supported the All Wilderness Alternative and 1 supported the Proposed Action (no wilderness). Of 36 written comments, three supported the All Wilderness recommendation and five supported No Wilderness. Subjects of the comments were the proximity of the proposed wilderness to the Desert National Wildlife Range, possible buffer zones for the Range, desert tortoise, race courses, oil and gas potential and potential power line intrusions. In a letter from the Clearinghouse of the State of Nevada, dated September 7, 1988, the Director of the Clearinghouse said, "...the State concurs with the recommendation presented in the document (Draft Nevada Contiguous Lands Wilderness EIS)." During Public Hearings oral testimony was given by a Lincoln County representative. Lincoln county supports BLM's No Wilderness (Proposed Action) recommendation.

# FAR SOUTH EGANS NV-040-172





## **FAR SOUTH EGANS WILDERNESS STUDY AREA**

### **1. THE STUDY AREA - 53,224 acres**

The Far South Egans WSA (NV-040-172) is located in east-central Nevada within Lincoln and Nye Counties. It lies about 50 road miles south of Ely, 200 miles north of Las Vegas, along U.S. Highway 318. The WSA is comprised entirely of public lands with no State or private inholdings. The boundaries of the WSA consist almost entirely of improved dirt roads. The northwest portion of the WSA is bounded by the Shingle Pass Road. The east boundary is formed by several jeep trails and roads along the west side of Cave Valley. The Trough Spring Canyon Road forms the unit's southern boundary. The west boundary generally follows the Highway 318 right-of-way with portions formed by other roads, unnatural features, or legal boundaries.

### **2. RECOMMENDATION AND RATIONALE - 42,316 acres recommended for wilderness 10,908 acres recommended for nonwilderness**

The recommendation for wilderness designation is due to the quality of wilderness values, the lack of competing uses or other resource values, and the area's manageability. The area recommended for wilderness is in the nearly pristine southern end of the Egan Range. The area's ruggedness has been primarily responsible for the perpetuation of its naturalness, and also contributes to its excellent scenic quality, especially on the west side where sheer rock cliffs rise up from small, hard-to-reach canyons. The view from on top is even more impressive. From the highest peak on the north end (elevation above 9,800 feet), the ridgeline slowly falls as it extends to the south; to both the east and the west, the land falls abruptly to elevations below 5,400 feet. Many portions are forested, not only by pinyon and juniper which are typical in this region, but also by bristlecone and ponderosa pines which are limited to the higher elevations. This wild, untrammelled setting provides many excellent opportunities for recreation. Hiking, camping and backpacking are demanding because of the terrain, but very rewarding and pleasurable because of the area's special features (bristlecone and ponderosa pines, an abandoned historic sawmill, high scenic values) and because of the impression that the many hidden places of the area have never before been visited. Nature study opportunities are very good in the WSA. Wildlife include deer, elk, mountain lions, and many raptors, such as golden eagles and ferruginous hawks.

The exhilaration of discovery extends into the mountains themselves. Whipple Cave, located on the northwest of the WSA, is a limestone solution cave with approximately 1,000 feet of known passages. Cave decorations include rimstone dams, draperies, and a huge column over 30 feet tall. Passage through the cave's double sink entrance requires a technical 70-foot descent. Technical climbers may also find challenge all along the western side of the WSA. Numerous rock outcrops and cliffs offer opportunities for a wide range of climbing skills. All of these recreational opportunities are available in an area where solitude is a guaranteed quality. The wildness of the area, its rugged topography and excellent vegetative screening, its many hidden recesses provide unparalleled opportunities for solitude. Designation of the recommended area as wilderness would create very few conflicts with other, competing resources. This rugged portion does not lend itself to many uses, such as wood harvest and livestock grazing.

### **3. WILDERNESS CHARACTERISTICS**

•**Naturalness:** The Far South Egans WSA as a whole is in a very natural state. That portion recommended suitable is in an almost pristine condition. Here, the rough terrain has held man's encroachment at bay. Forbidding cliffs, hidden caves and shelters, thick forests, and deeply cut canyons all enhance the primitive feeling of the WSA. Within Sawmill Canyon in the suitable portion of the WSA are the remnants of old logging operations from the turn of the century. In the many years that have passed since the logging occurred, the area has rehabilitated itself, and the few traces that remain are considered a special feature of historical value. In addition, one small, camouflaged guzzler for bighorn sheep was located within the suitable portion.

•**B. Solitude:** The Far South Egans WSA offers outstanding opportunities for solitude. Topographic screening is provided by many canyons. There is very little mineral interest in the area, no mining claims are located in it, and oil and gas development seems to be a remote possibility. In addition, the area has public support and little opposition. Two portions of the WSA were not recommended for wilderness for a variety of reasons. Portion A, on the west periphery of the WSA is mostly gently sloping alluvial fans and was recommended for uses other than wilderness because of the lower wilderness values and unnatural features present. This area is penetrated by two cherry stemmed roads and 11 ways totaling 19 miles, as well as three cherry stemmed gravel pits. The area is lacking in topographic and vegetative relief and the unnatural features are easily seen. Portion B, on the east side of the WSA was not recommended due to its relatively open nature with lower wilderness values, manageability concerns and conflicts with woodland products harvest. Several cherry stemmed routes extend into this portion, partially separating it from the suitable area. In addition, the easily accessible slopes have been used for limited woodcutting in the past and some unpermitted use is expected to continue even with wilderness designation. The area is very suitable for commercial fuel wood and Christmas tree harvesting.

**C. Primitive and Unconfined Recreation:** Outstanding opportunities for primitive recreation exist in the Far South Egans WSA. One of the foremost is caving in Whipple Cave on the west side of the WSA. Several unconfirmed reports exist of other caves in the WSA. Many other recreation opportunities abound in the area. The dramatic topography of the mountains make for difficult but highly enjoyable hiking, camping, and backpacking. The extensive vistas of the area, especially as seen from the ridgeline, enhances all such opportunities. The ponderosa and bristlecone pines occur together in one portion of the area, an unusual commingling, of interest to the students of nature. Other recreation opportunities include technical and nontechnical rock climbing and nature study. The combination of the quality and different types of recreation available in the WSA make for outstanding opportunities.

**D. Special Features:** Several special features exist in the Far South Egans WSA. The aforementioned ponderosa and bristlecone pines are special features because of their relative scarcity in this part of the region. Bristlecone pines are well-known as the oldest living plant species, and their existence in the WSA is especially significant because of the very low elevation at which they occur (as low as 7,000 feet) and their association with ponderosa pines in one portion. The ponderosa pines are a relict population from earlier climatological conditions. The remains of logging operations serve as a significant point of historic interest, a reminder of earlier times in Nevada when then-plentiful stands of ponderosa pines were heavily logged by small operators. Whipple Cave is also a special feature, an excellent example of limestone solutioning. For the geologic sightseer, the vertical descent into the cave is well worth the effort.

**4. MANAGEABILITY** (the area must be capable of being managed to preserve its wilderness character)

The Far South Egans WSA is manageable as wilderness. Manageability is enhanced by the lack of private and State inholdings within the WSA. In addition, no mining claims exist within the WSA and no mineral exploration or development is anticipated. Manageability of the area recommended for wilderness would be very easy. Further enhancing its manageability is the nature of the area: steep, rugged, abruptly rising from the surrounding valleys; characteristics that would cause the area to be largely self-protecting. The only exceptions occur in the north end where the land rises more gently and access is already available via three cherry stemmed routes and just south of the Shingle Pass Road. Some patrol efforts would be necessary to ensure that vehicles do not stray from existing routes. The Shingle Pass road creates a good northern WSA boundary.

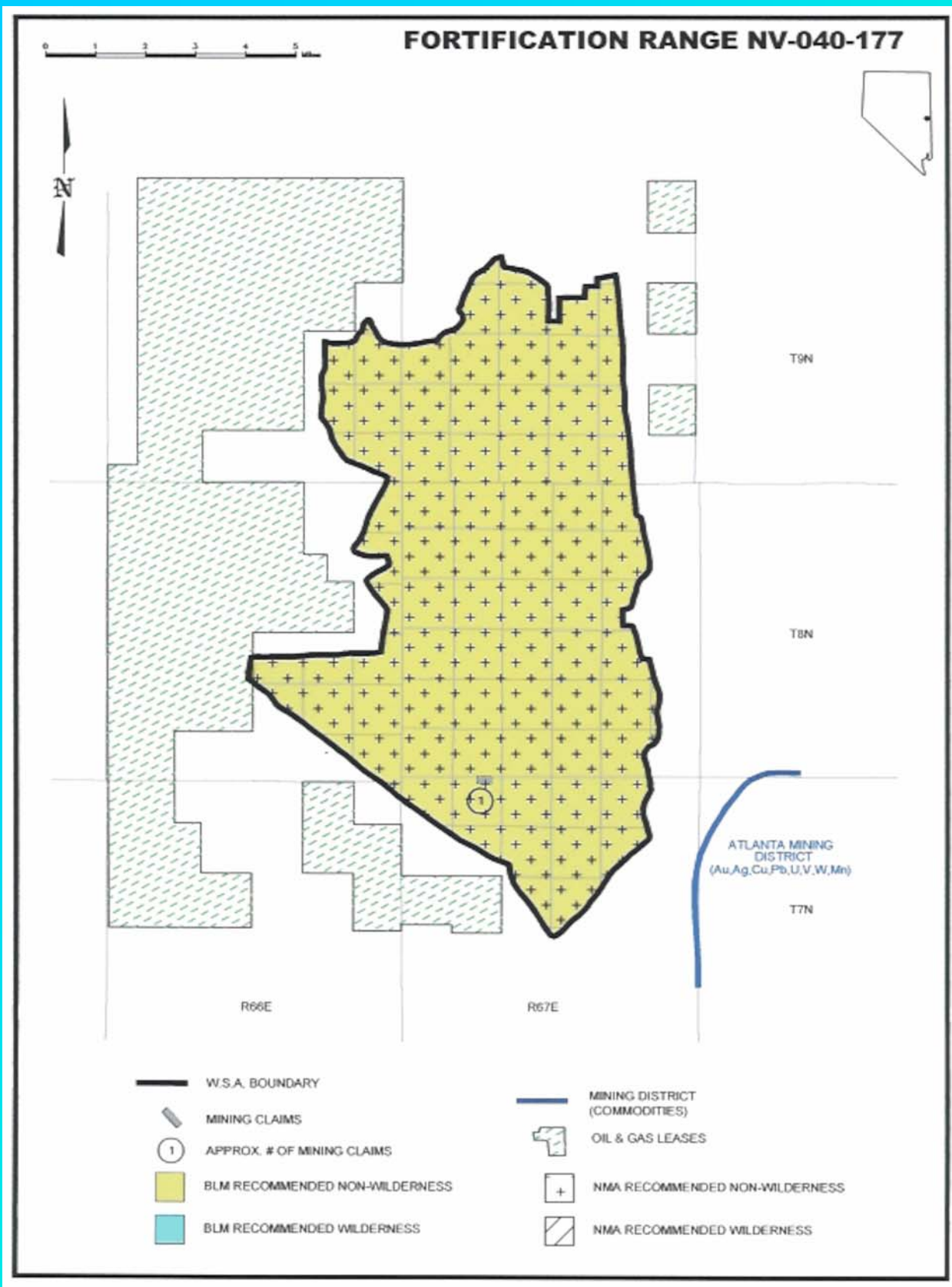
#### **5. ENERGY AND MINERAL RESOURCE VALUES**

The U.S. Geological Survey and the Bureau of Mines prepared a mineral assessment for the Far South Egans WSA in 1987 (U.S. Geological Survey Bulletin 1728-C). The report identifies the majority of the portion of the WSA recommended for wilderness as having a low potential for the occurrence of all metals. Two small areas on the southern and western fringes of the area recommended for wilderness were identified as having moderate potential for the occurrence of mineral resources. Moderate potential for cadmium, molybdenum, lead, and zinc exists in the southern part of the study area related to a faulted jasperoid vein in Trough Spring Canyon. The confidence level for this rating is low. Potential for energy resources (oil, gas, geothermal) within the study area is low, based on exposed rock units. High geothermal potential is still recognized in the area of Butterfield Springs on the southwest border of the WSA.

## **6. SUMMARY OF WSA-SPECIFIC COMMENTS**

During formal public review of the draft EIS and Wilderness Technical Report held between April 8 to July 8, 1983 a total of nine comments were received specifically addressing the Far South Egans WSA. Of those, six were written comments and three were oral testimonies. In general, all but one commenter supported wilderness designation for all or part of the WSA, while the remaining commenter mentioned the Far South Egans WSA but took no formal position on wilderness designation. The main points mentioned in support of this area as wilderness were its scenery, ruggedness and lack of conflicts. The Bureau of Indian Affairs, Bureau of Mines, Bureau of Reclamation, Fish and Wildlife Service, Environmental Protection Agency, National Park Service, and the Department of the Air Force all commented on the draft EIS. None of these agencies had a jurisdictional conflict with any of the alternatives. The Governor of Nevada as well as the State Divisions of State Lands, Parks, Forestry, and Historic Preservation and archeology, support wilderness stating the unit "appears suitable for designation." The Nevada Department of Wildlife supports wilderness as well, stating "wildlife conflicts are not severe and designation may enhance populations by providing future protective measures. The Lincoln County Conservation District stated that the "area has some possibility for limited wilderness activity where mineral enrichment is not evident and the vegetation is closer to original condition. One letter was received on the final EIS from the Environmental Protection Agency which supported the BLM's wilderness recommendation.





## **FORTIFICATION RANGE WILDERNESS STUDY AREA**

### **1. THE STUDY AREA - 41,615 acres**

The Fortification Range WSA (NV-040-177) is located in Lincoln County about 50 miles southeast of Ely. The entire WSA is comprised of 41,615 acres of public land with no private or State inholdings. A parcel of private land at Indian Springs forms a portion of the northeast boundary. Within Spring Valley, a jeep trail that follows the base of the range forms the eastern boundary of the WSA. The southern boundary is formed by the Horse Corral Pass and Bitter Well roads. The Travis seeding and Travis seeding fence within Lake Valley define the western boundary while the northern boundary is defined by a primitive jeep trail that traverses the range from the North Gorge Eye Well to Indian Springs.

### **2. RECOMMENDATION AND RATIONALE - 0 acres recommended for wilderness 41,615 acres recommended for nonwilderness**

The recommendation for this WSA is to release the entire area for uses other than wilderness. The Fortification Range was recommended for uses other than wilderness because the WSA's high wilderness values are limited to a small area in the north end of the WSA around the Cottonwood Canyon drainage. The size (4,800 acres) was not judged sufficient to justify a wilderness recommendation. The remainder of the WSA has relatively low wilderness values. Few conflicts exist with this area although competing uses related to woodland products harvest and vegetation conversion do exist. While superb scenic values and opportunities for outstanding primitive and unconfined recreation are recognized within the WSA, they are found concentrated within a relatively limited area in the north end of the unit. As one moves south through the range from Cottonwood Canyon, the quality of recreation opportunities quickly declines. In contrast to the natural diversity of Cottonwood Canyon, the remainder of the WSA is characterized by a dense, less diverse, monotypic pinyon-juniper woodland which is common throughout this part of the Great Basin. Scenery is less spectacular and wildlife is less abundant and diverse. Opportunities for recreation exist, but their quality is not especially noteworthy. The recommendation was also made in consideration of the fact that the fairly accessible nature of the WSA and the dense pinyon cover lends itself to woodland products harvest and vegetation manipulation to enhance wildlife diversity and change range conditions to increase forage. Both the east and west sides of the WSA have been identified for conversion to increase forage and improve habitat by both livestock and wildlife interests. The 4,800 acre area surrounding Cottonwood Canyon has been proposed for designation as an Area of Critical Environmental Concern (ACEC).

### **3. WILDERNESS CHARACTERISTICS**

**A. Naturalness:** Most of the Fortification Range is in a completely natural condition. The thick forests and rugged volcanic rocks have helped preserve the area's naturalness. Intrusions in the WSA are limited to the periphery of the unit. The east bench is penetrated at several points by cherry stemmed routes, most less than a mile long. These are all well-screened by dense tree cover (most are used only for access by hunters, trappers, and pine nut gatherers) and have very little impact on the naturalness of the area as a whole. In addition, two roads, each about 3 miles long, extend into the area, one on the south end in Smiley Canyon, and the other on the west in the Gorge Eye. Both of these are minimally intrusive as they meander among the trees, well screened by the woodland canopy.

A few range developments exist within the WSA. A 1-mile section of fence extends into the south end of the WSA and is well screened. Cottonwood Spring in the northeast is developed and a pipeline extends down the canyon to a water tank located outside of the WSA. Other developments, include two small corrals, two fence line tie-offs (less than 1,000 feet in length), and an abandoned pipeline. Due to the dense tree cover, these developments have little affect on the naturalness of the WSA as a whole.

**B. Solitude:** Excellent opportunities for solitude exist in the WSA, but fall short of outstanding. Good vegetative cover exists in nearly all parts of the WSA due to the dense pinyon-juniper woodland. Topographic screening is provided by the side canyons, however, with the exception of the northern portion of the unit the mountain range is gentle in relief with few outcrops and is composed of a single ridgeline. Overall, these characteristics, combined with good unit configuration and size, make for many 'secluded spot' where visitors may escape all visible and audible evidence of man.

**C. Primitive and Unconfined Recreation:** Outstanding opportunities for primitive recreation exist in the Fortification Range WSA mainly as a result of the outstanding scenery on the north end. Here, hiking, camping, and nature study are enhance by the extraordinary setting provided by the weathered rock formations. Opportunities for observing the geology of the area constitute a separate class of high quality recreation opportunities in themselves. As one moves south through the range from Cottonwood Canyon, the quality of recreation opportunities quickly declines. The diverse ecosystem of Cottonwood Canyon changes to a much less diverse pinyon-juniper ecosystem. Scenery is less spectacular, wildlife is less abundant and diverse. Opportunities for recreation exist, of course, but their quality is not especially noteworthy.

**D. Special Features:** The unique geologic formations which provide for the scenic quality of the WSA's north end is considered a special feature. The ponderosa pines located in and around Cottonwood Canyon are unusual in eastern Nevada; remnant populations of larger stands that existed under different climatological conditions. They also serve as a seed source and a source of genetic diversity, and contribute as one element of the northern area's scenic beauty.

#### **4. MANAGEABILITY**

The Fortification Range WSA can be managed to preserve its wilderness values in the long term. No private lands occur within the WSA, and no mining claims are located within it. Portions of the lower slopes of the range are leased for oil and gas and it is anticipated that a wildcat oil well would be drilled along the fringe of the WSA even with wilderness designation. Wilderness values would be temporarily lost on approximately 3 acres as a result. Most exploration interest is focused on the adjacent valleys (Lake Valley and Spring Valley) to the exclusion of the mountains. Occasional patrols would be necessary during the autumn hunting season to ensure vehicle use is confined to existing roads or trails.

## **5. ENERGY AND MINERAL RESOURCE VALUES**

The Fortification Range WSA has been assigned low mineral potential. No mining claims exist within the WSA. Oil and gas potential in the WSA has also been rated as low based on lack of geologic evidence. Some geophysical exploration has taken place on the western fringe of the unit in connection with exploration efforts in Lake Valley, where interest is centered.

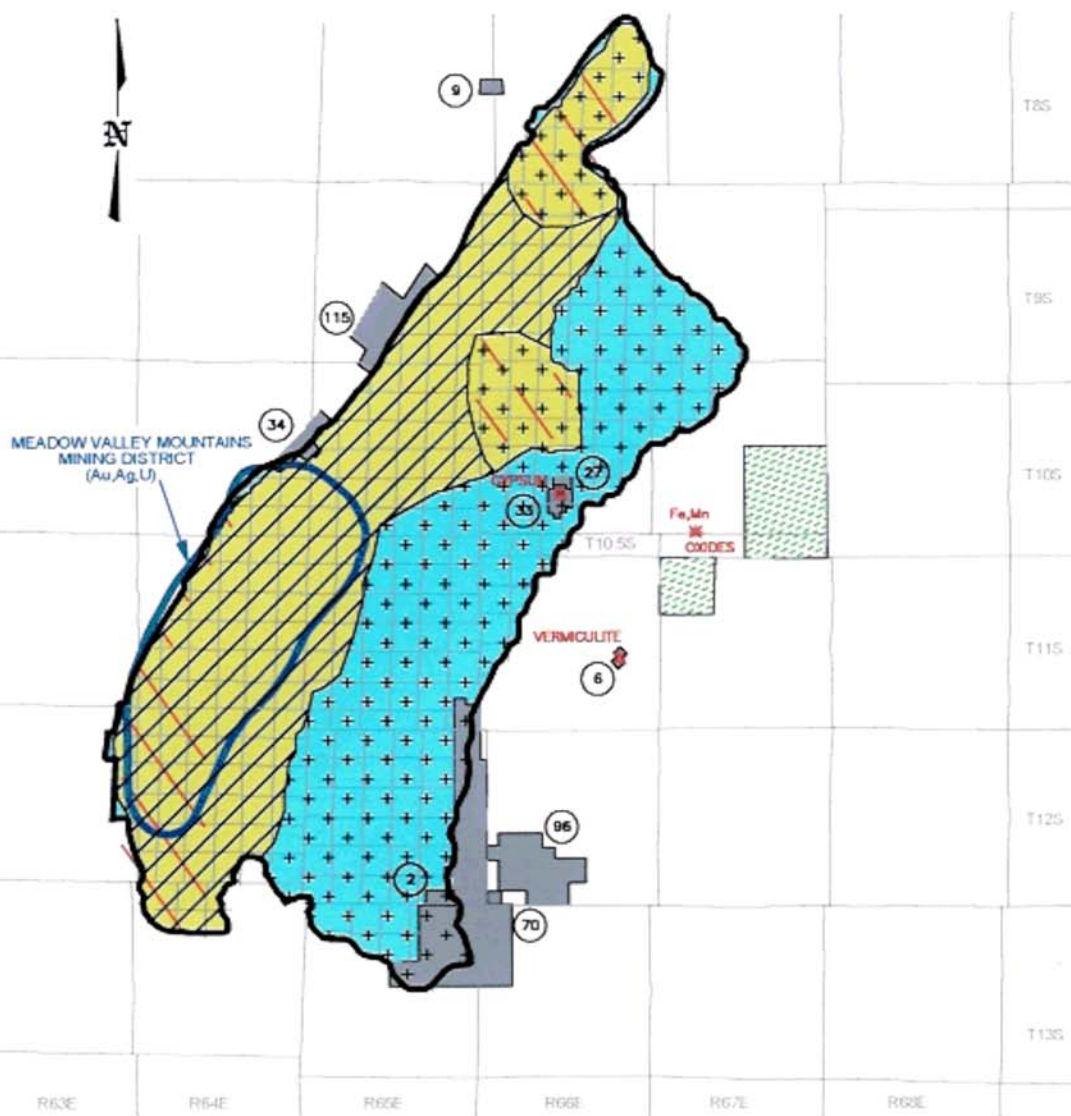
## **6. SUMMARY OF WSA-SPECIFIC PUBLIC COMMENTS**

During formal public review of the draft EIS and Wilderness Technical Report held between April 8 to July 8, 1983, a total of 38 comments were received specifically addressing the Fortification Range. Of those, 28 were written comments and 10 were oral testimonies. In general, 32 commentors supported wilderness designation for all or part of the WSA. Five commentors supported no wilderness for the WSA, while one commenter



# MEADOW VALLEY RANGE NV-050-156

0 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10 Miles



- |  |                                |  |                                |
|--|--------------------------------|--|--------------------------------|
|  | MINING CLAIMS                  |  | W.S.A. BOUNDARY                |
|  | APPROX. # OF MINING CLAIMS     |  | DOCUMENTED MINERAL OCCURRENCES |
|  | MINING DISTRICT (COMMODITIES)  |  | OIL & GAS LEASES               |
|  | AREAS OF MINERAL POTENTIAL     |  | NMA RECOMMENDED NON-WILDERNESS |
|  | BLM RECOMMENDED NON-WILDERNESS |  | NMA RECOMMENDED WILDERNESS     |
|  | BLM RECOMMENDED WILDERNESS     |  |                                |

## **MEADOW VALLEY RANGE WILDERNESS STUDY AREA**

### **1. THE STUDY AREA - 185,744 acres**

The Meadow Valley Range Wilderness Study Area (WSA), NV-050-156, is located in Lincoln County except for approximately two miles of the southernmost end located in Clark County. The south end of the WSA is about fifty-five miles northeast of Las Vegas. The WSA contains approximately 185,744 acres of public lands administered by the Bureau of Land Management with no split estate or private or state inholdings. The eastern WSA boundary is the Union Pacific Railroad right-of-way, private lands, west edge of the County road or the centerline of the stream in the Meadow Valley Wash. This wash is also the western boundary of the Mormon Mountains WSA (NV-050-161). Along the north side of the Meadow Valley Range WSA, the boundary follows a jeep trail to Avertt Reservoir, then cross-country to another jeep trail on the northwestern-tip. The west boundary is a series of peak to peak lines and ridges along the base of the mountains until it comes to the Aerojet lands where it shares a common border. The southern boundary cuts cross-country until it reaches Dead Man's Wash, thence up this drainage, across its divide into Farrier Wash which it follows to its intersection with Meadow Valley Wash.

### **2. RECOMMENDATION AND RATIONALE - 97,180 acres recommended for wilderness 88,564 acres recommended for nonwilderness**

The recommendation for this WSA is to designate approximately 97,180 acres as wilderness and release approximately 88,564 acres for uses other than wilderness. The area recommended for wilderness designation is natural, provides outstanding opportunities for both solitude and primitive and unconfined recreation, and provides better protection for solitude-dependent wildlife. The wilderness integrity of this area can be retained with minimal management because of the extremely rugged topography. Approximately thirty-four miles of jumbled, remote and extremely varied ridges stretch from one end of this area to the other precluding vehicular access. As a result, the area has remained very natural. Because of the area's size and precipitous topography along the western edge, solitude is outstanding. Steep cliffs, jagged peaks and hidden narrow canyons provide interesting places to explore. Conical buff-based Sunflower Mountain sits astride the main ridgeline, a visual focal point from great distances.

The northernmost part of the area is forested with pinyon and juniper trees providing relief from continuous low desert shrub vegetation. This portion of the area also contains an attractive natural arch. Outstanding photographic opportunities exist, with grand vistas and animals such as bighorn sheep. Day hiking, backpacking and hunting are good. Wilderness designation for this area would provide long-term protection for bighorn sheep and other solitude-dependent wildlife. Mining claims do exist just inside the western boundary of this area and in the northern toe. However, it is unlikely that these few claims would have development or production. The 88,564 acres recommended for uses other than wilderness comprise the east half of the WSA generally below the 3,200 foot contour and the northeastern shoulder of the unit. This acreage is not recommended for wilderness in order to reduce some of the resource conflicts presently occurring and projected to occur within the WSA. This area also offers less than quality wilderness values of solitude and primitive recreational opportunities. These lands generally exhibit lower topographic diversity and lesser wilderness values. The southeastern end is an area of nondescript low hills, susceptible to ORV use. North of this area are the Bunker Hills, an area of moderate and outstanding disturbance at its terminus. Ways associated with this road where it crosses the bajada, portend a future ORV manageability problem. North of the Bunker Hills is a large bajada stretching two-thirds of the length of the WSA nearly to Hackberry Canyon. Wilderness values are mainly moderate and there is concern regarding ORV manageability should access be developed to this region. The lower end of Hackberry Canyon is not recommended for wilderness because it is readily accessible from Meadow Valley Wash and is frequently used by hunters and the grazing allotment permittee. Along the unit's northeastern corner, the area drained by Vigo Wash has generally low relief and low wilderness values. It is presently crossed by numerous ways and will be difficult to manage without heavy patrol.

### **3. WILDERNESS CHARACTERISTICS**

**A. Naturalness:** The 97,180 acres recommended for wilderness are predominately natural with negligible human imprints except for the upper portions of the Vigo Canyon drainage. The Meadow Valley Mountains are very rugged and little used by man. Occasional vehicle tracks can be found in some of the washes along the west boundary, but are of little consequence. A cherry stem road services an old quarry and oil drill site in the Bunker Hills. Several ways are associated with this road. The 88,564 acres recommended for nonwilderness do contain several human imprints including a number of ways which run for several miles in the large Vigo Canyon drainage. A corral exists in Hackberry Canyon and several quail guzzles are located near the western boundary of the WSA. This setting does not however, diminish the overall naturalness of the area.

**B. Solitude:** Within the area recommended for wilderness there are outstanding opportunities for solitude. The Meadow Valley Mountains are rugged and contain numerous small, narrow canyons, cliffs, peaks and rocky outcrops. On the central bajada topographic relief and vegetation are limited, but its vastness contributes to the solitude. Secluded spots are easily obtained in almost any portion of the recommended wilderness area and vistas of uninhabited, virtually empty space enhance the sense of solitude. Some solitude is obtainable in the Bunker Hills portions not recommended for wilderness but screening is limited due to low hills and shallow washes. In Vigo and Hackberry Canyons, solitude can be readily obtained. Once out of Vigo Canyon and onto the lower relief lands of the upper drainage, solitude is more difficult to obtain because of the influence of the boundary road and the many ways which cross it. In the toe, the narrowness allows a greater influence of outside sights and sounds to impinge on solitude, but vegetative screening is better which compensates somewhat.

**C. Primitive and Unconfined Recreation:** The area recommended for wilderness offers outstanding opportunities for a primitive and unconfined recreation experience. The long ridgeline offers numerous peaks, narrow canyons and passes. Sunflower Mountain is a focal point because its location, coloration, and texture contrast markedly with the surrounding terrain. Grapevine Spring on the west side also provides a destination for hikers on the way in or out of the WSA. On the east side, Hackberry and Vigo Canyons are good day hiking areas. Numerous loops and through routes are possible for backpackers. Routes mentioned for day hiking could easily be expanded to longer trips. Climbing and scrambling are available in most of the recommended wilderness area. Limited climbing opportunities are available as well. There are excellent opportunities for photography of desert bajadas and grand vistas. Bighorn sheep are also present and may present photographic opportunities. The WSA, is large and offers solitude and challenging hikes. It consequently has good opportunities for all types of primitive recreational usage.

#### **4. MANAGEABILITY**

The 97,180 acres of the WSA recommended for wilderness can reasonably be managed as wilderness to preserve values now present in the area. There is a small area of mining claims on the extreme western periphery of the WSA. These are physically isolated from the WSA proper by virtue of their being on the western escarpment. The area is a solid block of public land with no private inholdings, state lands or right-of-way. Although opportunities exist for ORV travel within the WSA, these opportunities are limited to the major drainage bottoms of the precipitous Wild Cat Wash and Vigo and Hackberry Canyons rocky terrain limits ORV travel in other parts of the WSA.



## **5. ENERGY AND MINERAL RESOURCE VALUES**

U.S. Geological Survey and Bureau of Mines prepared a mineral assessment for the 97,180 acres of the Meadow Valley WSA recommended for wilderness. The survey was conducted from 1983 through 1986. According to the report, U.S. Geological Survey Bulletin 1729-C, deposits of perlite crop out discontinuously at the base of volcanic slopes throughout the study area. Sand and gravel exist in significant quantities; consisting of alluvial deposits eroded from adjacent bedrock slopes.

## **6. SUMMARY OF WSA-SPECIFIC PUBLIC COMMENTS**

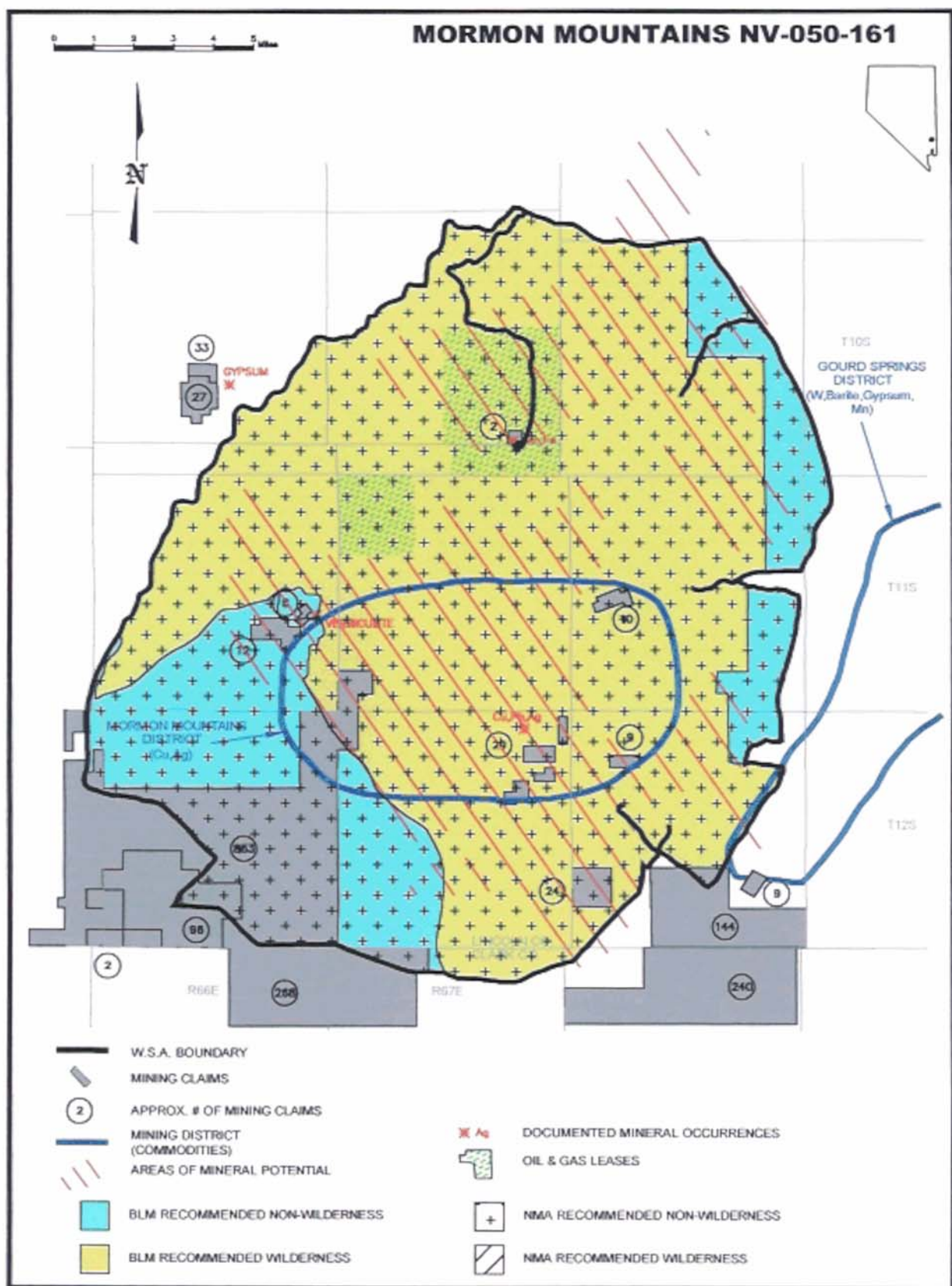
During formal public review of the draft EIS, a total of 153 comments specifically addressing this WSA were received. Of those, 150 were written and 3 were oral statements received at the public hearing on the draft EIS. In general 138 commentors supported wilderness designation for all or part of the WSA. Fourteen commentors supported less wilderness for the Meadow Valley Range WSA. Most comments which specifically mentioned the WSA touch on high wilderness values (outstanding

opportunities for solitude and primitive recreation). Comments opposing wilderness centered around the potential mineral resource values and potential mineral exploration development of the WSA. County: Lincoln County did not respond. The Clark County Department of Comprehensive Planning concurred with the recommended wilderness designation contained within the preferred alternative in the Clark Draft EIS. State: The Governor of Nevada in his consistency letter, dated December 28, 1984, supported the partial alternative with the livestock development of lower Hackberry Canyon left out.

Federal: The U.S. Bureau of Mines suggested a boundary change to exclude the mining claims on the unit's western boundary. The U.S. Air Force would like to place two electronic packages on the main ridgeline even if the area is designated as wilderness and would like to continue use of the region for low level supersonic training. The U.S. Environmental Protection Agency observed that the criteria for selecting suitable verses

nonsuitable wilderness areas for selecting verses nonsuitable wilderness areas was unclear in the DEIS. The major reasons can be attributed to mineral resources, management of ORV traffic and aesthetics. EPA recommends a evaluation of the WSA in the proposed action because of the speculative nature of the units mineral resources and the filling that the ORV use can be somewhat managed. EPA also stated that larger

areas should be included in the partial wilderness alternative which area considered manageable. This suggestion is based on the DEIS's description of the WSA's with regard to mineral resources as well as the areas that are not affected by manmade features. Finally EPA states that the FEIS should discuss the recovery of the areas mineral resources in greater detail.



## **MORMON MOUNTAINS WILDERNESS STUDY AREA**

### **1. THE STUDY AREA - 162,887 acres**

The Mormon Mountains wilderness study area (WSA), NV-050-161, is located approximately 75 miles northeast of Las Vegas, Nevada. The WSA contains the entire Mormon Mountains Range and is located in southeastern Lincoln County, Nevada, with a small portion of the WSA in northern Clark County. The WSA contains 162,887 acres of public land with no private inholdings (Table 1). The Mormon Mountains WSA is a large contiguous block of public land, surrounded on all sides by public land.

The study area configuration is generally rounded in shape, approximately 18 miles cross on the east-west axis and approximately 30 miles across the north-south axis. The study unit is bound by the Carp-Elgin Road on the north and east; Meadow Valley Wash Road and Union Pacific Railroad on the west; and, a hunting access road/seismic "thumper" trail on the south. Several short roads on the east side of the WSA are cherry stemmed and two cherry stemmed roads extend into the heart of the WSA. One six mile cherry stemmed road leads to an area of fairly recent mineral interest on the west side of the study area. One way, in the bottom of an active wash, extends nearly 9 miles into the heart of the study area to a large wildlife water development. Another way, on the east side, extends several miles to a spring development for livestock use.

### **2. RECOMMENDATION AND RATIONALE - 123,130 acres recommended for wilderness 39,757 acres recommended for nonwilderness**

The recommendation for this WSA is to designate approximately 123,130 acres as wilderness and release 39,757 acres for uses other than wilderness. BLM has carefully weighed existing and potential resources present in the WSA to develop the recommendation for the Mormon Mountain WSA. The configuration arrived at preserves areas of high wilderness and primitive recreation values while excluding large areas of bajadas which, although possessing wilderness and primitive recreation values, are not exceptional. At the same time, it also preserves substantial bajada areas which can be managed readily over the long term. The Bureau has been criticized for failing to recommend bajadas as suitable. These recommendations have occurred because bajadas are usually readily accessible to motor vehicles and have been impacted or are difficult to manage over the long term. The chief potential conflict within the area recommended for wilderness is between possible mineralization on one hand, and wilderness, wildlife, primitive recreation, scenic values and speleological resources on the other hand. A large population of bighorn sheep, mule deer and raptors provide wildlife observation opportunities. Caves and significant cultural resources comprise some of the more important special features present. Visually, the WSA is spectacular. Taken alone, the ragged-topped dome flanked by Moapa Peak and the East Mormon Mountains, is extremely rewarding. Added to these beautiful crags are massive cliffs, some overhung, which accentuate the peaks. Colors range from cliffs slashed by purple-brown and gray bands to brownish-orange peaks and reddish outcrops. Spires, fins and egg-shaped peaks attract both eye and camera. Yuccas, agaves, Joshua trees, pinyon pine and a relic stand of ponderosa pine provide contrast and variety. Removal of the southwestern bajada from the lands preliminarily recommended for wilderness designation resolves potential manageability problems with regard to the large block of mining claims located on a portion of it and with ORV access from two long ways which traverse it. Boundaries, for the portion of the study area recommended for wilderness designation, are easily identifiable and will preclude the majority of management concerns for the area recommended for wilderness.

### **3. WILDERNESS CHARACTERISTICS.**

**A. Naturalness:** Approximately fifty to sixty percent of the WSA is unaffected by manmade features. Most roads, ways, water developments, mines and mining disturbances around the WSA have been technically excluded by cherry stemming. Deep canyons and broken terrain limit the influence of these intrusions to the area adjacent to them. Numerous small quail guzzlers dot the lower elevations and three large big game guzzlers have been installed on the north side towards the higher elevations.

**B. Solitude:** The Mormon Mountains WSA contains outstanding opportunities for solitude. Much of the WSA consists of extremely rugged mountain peaks, rising 5,300 feet above the desert, large cliffs, deep canyons, numerous drainages, caves and difficult to reach bajadas. Majestic vistas of surrounding deserts, mountains and valleys enhance the feeling of solitude. Broken terrain isolates ridges and valleys from each other thus making activity nearly undetectable in the next one. Good vegetative screening above 5,000 feet also aids in obtaining solitude. Most of the WSA is far removed from outside influences, however, military aircraft flights do destroy the stillness of the experience needed for solitude. Secluded spots are easily locatable in all areas of the WSA due to the sheer size of the WSA. The best areas are found in the core area.

**C. Primitive and Undefined Recreation:** The Mormon Mountains WSA with its large size, diverse terrain, wildlife and vegetation offers outstanding opportunities for primitive and unconfined recreation. Various day hikes are available in conjunction with the cherry stem access routes, and others could be undertaken off the numerous peripheral roads adjacent to the WSA. The majority of the study area offers challenging and scenic hiking opportunities. Destination hiking and backpacking opportunities, as well as rock climbing and mountain climbing are available throughout a large portion of the WSA. Hunting for bighorn sheep and small game are popular in the WSA. The main mountain area offers beautiful big country vistas, fossils and bighorn sheep, providing exceptional opportunities for wildlife and nature photography. Lower areas offer abundant cultural resources, particularly in the vicinity of springs. The central escarpment of the WSA is well known as a scrambling, hiking, and climbing area. Mormon Peak, Moapa Peak and other unnamed peaks within the range are all well known desert climbs with 500 foot to 1,000 foot cliffs and offer an outstanding desert climbing experience. There are outstanding caving opportunities within the limestone peaks, walls, and canyons of the Mormon Mountains. Spectacular caves abound in the area and offer challenging opportunities to the user.

### **4. MANAGEABILITY:**

The area could be managed as wilderness. The biggest management challenge would be controlling motorized vehicle usage. There are several major washes aside from the cherry stem roads, which allow access into the area. The terrain along the periphery makes it accessible to vehicles. There are numerous tracks throughout the southwestern and southern areas, and control would be very difficult at best. The majority of the area does not have any problems from vehicles due to its very precipitous terrain. The entire WSA is composed of public land, with no encumbrances of record. The WSA is bordered on the west side by Union Pacific Railroad (200 foot wide, CC-06192) and WSA 0156 Meadow Valley. Approximately 11,500 acres (or 7.1 percent of the WSA) are covered by post-FLPMA mining claims. Only two pre-FLPMA lode mining claims exist (41.3 acres, part of which is a cherry stem). Other claims have been located but are presently abandoned. Historic mining or production is unknown..



## **5. ENERGY AND MINERAL RESOURCE VALUES**

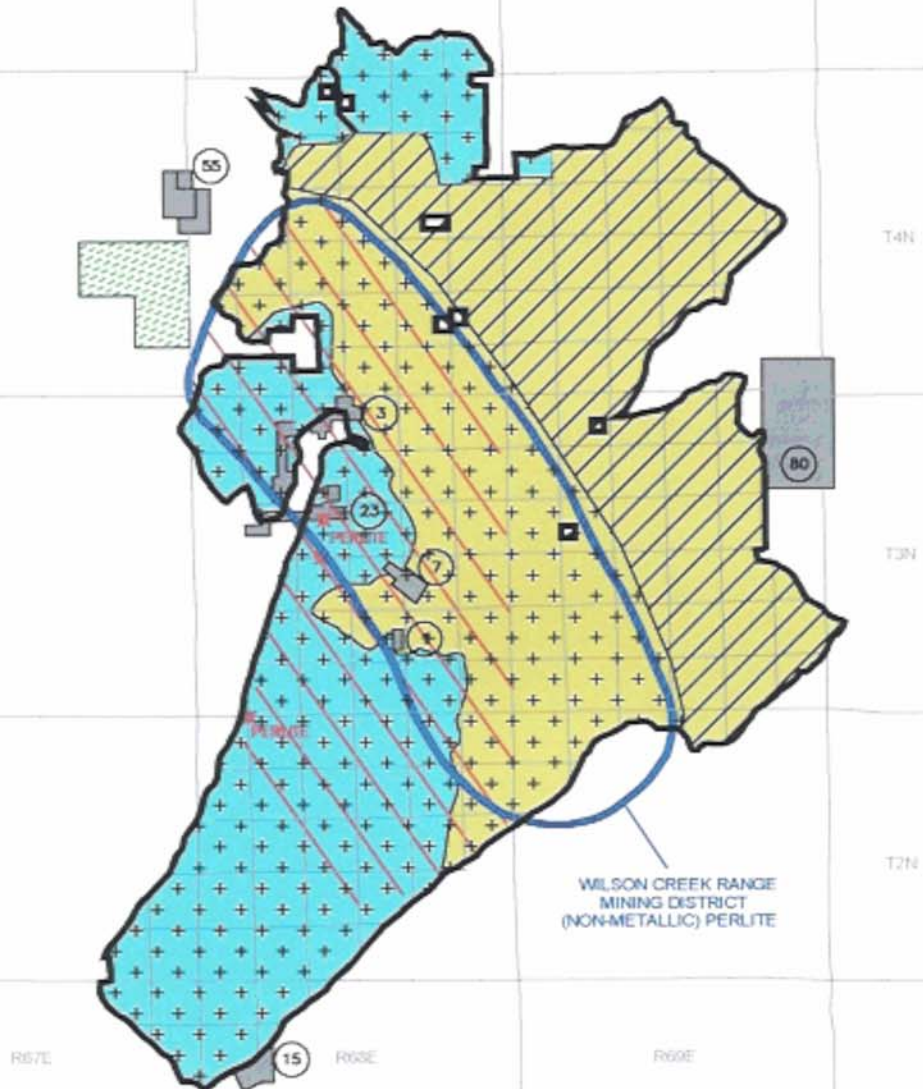
Occurrences of commercial grade limestone of undetermined extent and minor deposits of said were found. Portions of the area studied have high mineral resource potential for copper, lead, zinc, silver, gold, arsenic and antimony. Part has moderate potential for antimony. Two areas have moderate potential for tungsten, molybdenum and/or tin. The remainder has low resource potential for all metals. The area studied has moderate resource potential for oil and gas, except for areas which have had significant hydrothermal activity. It has low resource potential for manganese, barite, vermiculite, coal and geothermal. The following minerals appear on the National Defense Stockpile List of Strategic and Critical Materials and have been found in anomalous amount in the Mormon Mountains: antimony, copper, lead, silver, tin, zinc, tungsten and molybdenum. Economic or sub economic locatable resource values are not known to exist within this WSA. Hypothetical undiscovered resources of gypsum in unknown amounts are located in an identified area east of Carp. The inferred hypothetical gypsum prospect is less significant than several other gypsum prospects in the Caliente planning Unit. Undiscovered manganese, zinc, and tungsten (strategic listed minerals) may occur within this WSA, since these minerals occur in similar areas in the range immediately to the east. No known leasable mineral values exist in the Mormon Mountain wilderness study area. No documented occurrences of oil, gas, or geothermal resources are known, although, the entire WSA is under oil and gas lease.

## **6. SUMMARY OF WSA-SPECIFIC PUBLIC COMMENTS**

Public interest in the WSA is high due to relative ease of access to the Las Vegas metropolitan area from Interstate 15 and to its abundant resources. During formal public review of the draft EIS, a total of 162 comments specifically addressing this WSA were received. Of those, 158 were written and 4 were oral statements received at the public hearing on the draft EIS. In the Draft EIS only 23,690 acres of the study area was preliminarily recommended suitable for wilderness designation. An overwhelming majority of respondents, 160 (98.8%) of the 162 comments received supported wilderness designation for part or all of the study area. Of those, 156 recommended more wilderness than the DEIS Preferred Alternative. Only two commentators recommended no wilderness for this study area. County: Lincoln County did not respond. The Clark County Department of Comprehensive Planning concurred with the recommended wilderness designation contained within the preferred alternative in the Clark Draft EIS. State: The Governor of Nevada in his consistency letter, dated December 28, 1984, did not address the Mormon Mountain WSA. During the State's review of the Preliminary Draft EIS the Governor recommended 23,690 acres for wilderness designation. The state clearinghouse has indicated it opposes the larger wilderness recommendation contained in the Final EIS and this report due to mineral potentials. Federal: The U.S. Bureau of Mines recommended against wilderness designation for any portion of the Mormon Mountains WSA. The U.S. Air Force identified potential conflicts with continued use of the airspace over the Mormon Mountains WSA for military training and installation of electronic monitoring and tracking devices within the WSA. The U.S. Environmental Protection Agency observed that the criteria for selecting suitable versus unsuitable wilderness areas was unclear in the DEIS. Finally EPA stated the FEIS should discuss the recovery of the area's mineral resources in greater detail.

# PARSNIP PEAK NV-040-206

1 0 1 2 Miles  
1 0 1 2 Kilometers



- |  |                                |  |                                |
|--|--------------------------------|--|--------------------------------|
|  | W.S.A. BOUNDARY                |  | DOCUMENTED MINERAL OCCURRENCES |
|  | MINING CLAIMS                  |  | OIL & GAS LEASES               |
|  | APPROX. # OF MINING CLAIMS     |  | NMA RECOMMENDED NON-WILDERNESS |
|  | MINING DISTRICT (COMMODITIES)  |  | NMA RECOMMENDED WILDERNESS     |
|  | AREAS OF MINERAL POTENTIAL     |  |                                |
|  | BLM RECOMMENDED NON-WILDERNESS |  |                                |
|  | BLM RECOMMENDED WILDERNESS     |  |                                |

## **PARSNIP PEAK WILDERNESS STUDY AREA**

### **1. THE STUDY AREA - 88,175 ACRES**

The Parsnip Peak WSA (NV-040-206) is located in Lincoln County in east-central Nevada within the Wilson Creek Mountain Range. The nearest incorporated town is Pioche, Nevada, located 25 miles to the south. The north boundary of the WSA is formed by Camp Valley Road, Wilson Creek-Camp Valley Road (BLM Road 4045) and an unnamed jeep trail that connects to the Mount Wilson Vortac Station Road. Along the Wilson Creek-Camp Valley Road, the boundary circumvents private land. A one and one-half mile portion of this boundary connects the two parcels on a north-south point to point bearing between unsurveyed parcel corners. The western boundary is defined by an assortment of connections between jeep trails, county roads and point to point bearings. Beginning at the north end on the ridge of Mount Wilson, the boundary descends the Vortac Station Road and a jeep trail which connects to the Hulse Canyon Road. Here, the boundary circumvents private land in Hulse Canyon and continues to connect with a jeep trail. The boundary then ascends the mountain flank along a series of connecting jeep trails, then goes point to point to Blue Rock Springs to exclude a number of terminal ends of jeep trails. From Blue Rock Springs, the boundary goes point to point to an unnamed jeep trail which descends the mountain flank connecting with County Road 464, but not before cherry stemming a one-mile long jeep trail and old perlite mine workings. The boundary parallels the county road with a dirt road along the alluvial slope and ties back into County Road 464. The southern boundary of the unit is defined by the Spring Valley Road which crosses the range at Pierson Summit. The eastern boundary of the WSA is defined by two fence lines and the Spring Valley and Camp Valley Roads. The east-central portion of the boundary deviates from the fence lines by following an unnamed jeep road to private land surrounding Parsnip Spring. The boundary then follows the Parsnip Creek Road back to the fence line.

### **2. RECOMMENDATION AND RATIONALE - 53,560 acres recommended for wilderness 34,615 acres recommended for nonwilderness**

The area recommended for wilderness possesses unquestionably high wilderness values. The area has a great diversity of vegetation and land form, and provides an outstanding diversity of recreation and solitude opportunities. Resource conflicts and manageability concerns in the portion recommended for wilderness designation are few. The area retains a pristine character, and contains important riparian areas, wildlife populations, and diverse forest types. A northern portion of the WSA was recommended for nonwilderness to exclude areas accessible to vehicles, several parcels of private land, and an indefinite boundary between private parcels. A portion on the west side of the WSA was not recommended for wilderness to reduce conflicts with known mineral deposits, allow for mechanical vegetation conversions to benefit wildlife and livestock, alleviate manageability problems around some private land in the Hulse Canyon area, and to provide a better defined, more manageable boundary. The Patterson Wash area in the southwest portion of the WSA was also recommended for non-wilderness. Although its exclusion would reduce the ecological diversity of the proposed wilderness, it would reduce conflicts (range, wildlife, woodland products, minerals and energy) without significantly effecting opportunities for solitude or primitive recreation. There is also strong local opposition in the local area to inclusion of this area.

### **3. WILDERNESS CHARACTERISTICS.**

**A. Naturalness:** Most of the Parsnip Peak WSA recommended for wilderness is in a nearly pristine condition. The rugged nature of the portion recommended for wilderness prevents much use by livestock, and springs and riparian areas are relatively free of the developments and signs of livestock use. Forest cover in the WSA varies with elevation and aspect with aspen groves predominating on the north slopes and extensive thickets of mountain mahogany on the south. Deer, elk and other wildlife heavily use these stands. Bald eagles enjoy the pockets of fir which are found in craggy niches in the higher elevations. Native grasses are found throughout the WSA. Unnatural features within the area are few, but include several cherry stemmed roads, ways, range developments (springs and fences), and a partly developed 40 acre parcel of private land at Buster Spring. On the north end, the large Mount Wilson Burn was seeded with a mixture of grasses, some of which are not indigenous to the area. With the passage of time and the return of native shrub and grass species the area now appears very natural.

**B. Solitude:** Outstanding opportunities for solitude are available throughout the portion of the Parsnip Peak WSA recommended for wilderness due to its large size, generally dense vegetative cover, and excellent topographic screening. Many "secluded places" exist where a user can disassociate himself from all sights and sounds of man. Opportunities are truly outstanding. Opportunities for solitude are somewhat less in the area recommended for uses other than wilderness to the north and west where more intensive livestock management occurs and past mining operations are located. To the south where the land is flat and the predominant vegetation is sagebrush, solitude opportunities are considerably diminished.

**C. Primitive and Unconfined Recreation:** Good opportunities for many types of recreation exist in the Parsnip Peak WSA, and this diversity is outstanding. Types of recreation include backpacking, hiking, camping, horseback riding, nature study, archaeological and geological sightseeing, rock climbing, hunting and trapping. The primitive backcountry setting of the WSA, along with the outstanding scenery of the area, enhance all of these opportunities. As with the opportunities for solitude, the quality of recreational opportunities is lessened in the southern, nonwilderness portion of the WSA. The above mentioned recreational opportunities are concentrated more in the upper elevations, off the alluvial fans.

**D. Special Features:** Complementing the high scenic values, are abundant and varied prehistoric archaeological sites. The Mount Wilson Archaeological District has been delineated in the north end of the WSA and is eligible for nomination for National Register of Historic Places. Sites known to occur within the WSA include campsites, rock rings, rock shelters and rock art. One unique feature is the "Indian Playground", an elaborate maze-like rock alignment which can be clearly seen from the air.

#### **4. MANAGEABILITY**

The Parsnip Peak WSA would be manageable as wilderness with only a few difficulties. The WSA contains numerous scattered private parcels, some with cherry stemmed access, and some with no access at all. Within the recommended portion, access to Mud and Cole Springs (both in the north end) would create some adverse impacts, but would not affect the integrity of the area. Western portions recommended for nonwilderness would present management difficulties due to the locations of private lands and adjacent, but currently inactive mine lands. The southwestern portion recommended for nonwilderness is a low, open valley area with no topographic barriers serving as a separation between it and the remainder of the valley. The openness of the portion creates some concerns by virtue of the accessibility it lends to off-road vehicles. Off-road travel would likely continue even with wilderness designation due to the difficulty of effective patrols. Some conflicts may occur, however, with the wilderness designation. Surface disturbance as a result of mineral exploration on valid claims may occur although development is not anticipated. In addition, several areas identified for vegetation conversion for both wildlife and livestock purposes are located within the portion recommended for wilderness. These conversions may still occur however they will be restricted to fires, with no mechanical conversions allowed.

In summary, conflicts in the area recommended for wilderness are minimal and wilderness and its compatible resource uses were determined to be the highest and best use of this portion. Additionally, designation would create a high quality addition to the National Wilderness Preservation System.

#### **5. ENERGY AND MINERAL RESOURCES VALUES**

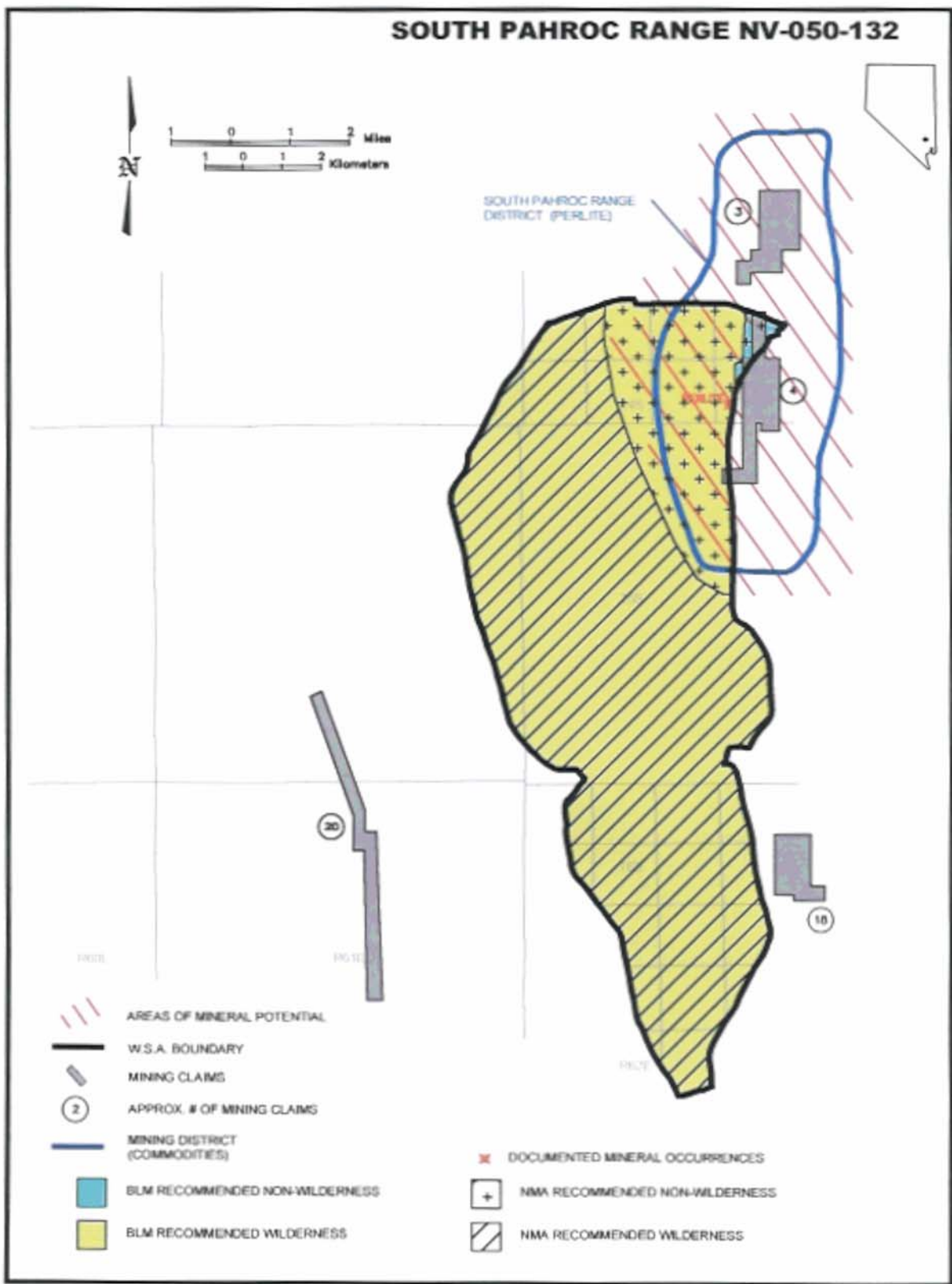
The majority of the area recommended for wilderness has low potential for mineral resources. Discontinuous zones of moderate potential for perlite deposits are identified along the western and southwestern boundary of the recommended wilderness. On the western edge of the recommended wilderness, a small area is identified as having high potential for the occurrence of mineral resources including arsenic, antimony, mercury and gold. Perlite deposits are common along the western portion of the WSA. Although considered suitable for plaster and concrete aggregate, most of the reserves and deposits identified within the USGS/BM assessment are considered sub economic due to costs of exploration and lack of access to the deposits. Energy resource potential for the Parsnip Peak WSA is low. Mineral potential speculations are low to moderate for the majority of the WSA.



## **6. SUMMARY OF WSA-SPECIFIC PUBLIC COMMENTS**

During formal public review of the draft EIS and Wilderness Technical Report held between April 8 to July 8, 1983 a total of 10 comments were received specifically addressing the Parsnip Peak WSA. Of those, six were written comments and four were oral testimonies. Seven commentators supported wilderness designation for all or part of the WSA and three commentators supported no wilderness for the WSA. Comments supporting wilderness mention the scenic rock formations and the splendid ponderosa/oak/aspens stands. Also mentioned is the fact that the Wilson Burn area is natural looking. Comments opposing designation state the unit has potential for vegetation improvements, contains private lands and water holdings, and has mining claims and mineral deposits. The Bureau of Indian Affairs, Bureau of Mines, Bureau of Reclamation, Fish and Wildlife Service, Environmental Protection Agency, National Park Service, and the Department of the Air Force all commented on the draft EIS. None of these agencies had a jurisdictional conflict with any of the alternatives. The Governor of Nevada and the Nevada Department of Wildlife supported a no wilderness recommendation for the Parsnip Peak WSA, because of the existence of mineral deposits and the potential for vegetation conversions. The State Divisions of State Lands, Parks, Forestry, and Historic Preservation and Archeology support wilderness designation. The Lincoln County Conservation District opposes wilderness designation because it could prohibit vegetation conversion. One letter was received on the final EIS from the Environmental Protection Agency which supported the BLM's wilderness recommendation.

# **SOUTH PAHROC RANGE NV-050-132**



## **SOUTH PAHROC RANGE WILDERNESS STUDY AREA**

### **1. THE STUDY AREA - 28,600 acres**

The South Pahroc Range Wilderness Study Area (WSA), NV-050-132, is located in Lincoln County, approximately 30 miles west of Caliente, and 120 miles north of Las Vegas. The WSA contains 28,600 acres of BLM lands with no split estate or private inholdings. A power line road bounds the northern portion of the WSA, while approximately 1.2 miles of the northeastern boundary skirts existing perlite claims. The eastern and southern boundaries of the study area follow the approximate base of the major escarpment. On the unit's west side, the study area is bounded for a distance of 3 miles by an unpaved road that parallels the base of the mountain.

### **2. RECOMMENDATION AND RATIONALE - 28,395 acres recommended for wilderness**

#### **205 acres recommended for nonwilderness**

The 28,395 acre area is recommended for wilderness designation because it is natural and provides outstanding opportunities for both solitude and primitive and unconfined recreation. The area is manageable as wilderness due primarily to the extreme ruggedness and relative inaccessibility of much of the area. Conflicts with other resource uses of the portion recommended for wilderness designation are minimal. Grazing use of the area will be allowed to continue. Within the 28,395 acres recommended suitable for wilderness, there are no mining claims as of the date of this report. Identified mineral values within this area include a sub economic perlite resource, anomalous concentrations of gold, arsenic and antimony, and moderate resource potential for disseminated gold. Oil and gas leases are located along the western edge of the WSA and extend from the adjacent valley into the study area. Identified resource potential for oil and gas and geothermal energy is low. The 205 acres recommended for uses other than wilderness lie on the far northeastern corner of the South Pahroc Range WSA and are encumbered by pre-FLPMA mining claims filed for perlite. This area is adjacent to an operating perlite mine and is susceptible to a logical extension of the mining operation. Present mining is primarily by underground methods on the steep escarpment; extension of this operation would be screened from the remainder of the WSA by the steep eastern escarpment.

### **3. WILDERNESS CHARACTERISTICS**

**A. Naturalness:** The 28,395 acres recommended for wilderness are predominantly natural. The area is extremely rugged with deeply cut canyons, high ridges, large rounded boulders and heavily forested expanses. Most of the South Pahroc Range is a solitary volcanic massif composed of varying colored layers of welded tuff that have weathered into unusual pockets, columns and stone faces. The majority of the area is free of man's imprints. A one mile way runs southerly from the north end of the unit. Along the eastern and western boundaries there are pipelines and stock developments consisting of corrals, fences, tanks and earthen reservoirs associated with three developed springs. These are localized imprints visible only from the immediate vicinity. A power line runs along the northern boundary and a perlite mine, consisting of open pit and tunneling operations, is situated just outside the northeastern boundary of the WSA. These unnatural features are largely screened from the remainder of the WSA by the steep eastern escarpment and thus have little effect on the wilderness values. The 205 acres recommended for release from wilderness designation is in essentially natural condition. This area contains pre-FLPMA mining claims filed for perlite.

Should these claims prove valid under the test of validity examination, development would be anticipated. The northeast corner of this area is adjacent to an operating perlite mine; naturalness values are diminished in the immediate vicinity of this operation.

**B. Solitude:** The area recommended for wilderness designation contains outstanding opportunities for solitude. Nearly the entire mountain range is enclosed within this area, creating an "island in the sky " effect. Moderately deep, steep-walled drainages cut across the mountain from east to west. Differential weathering of welded tuff layers has created numerous pockets, holes, columns and the ubiquitous, large rounded boulders that provide excellent topographic screening. These geologic features are heavily interlaced with stands of pinyon-juniper, white fir and aspen forming isolated glades in which a person is isolated from even relatively nearby groups. The overall effect of these differing qualities is to provide a large area where outstanding solitude is complemented by natural and scenic wonder. Within the 205 acres recommended for uses other than wilderness, the opportunities for solitude are diminished by the comparative openness of the terrain and the sparseness of vegetative cover. Much of this area is gently rolling bajada; the ubiquitous large tuff boulders are less numerous in this region and the stands of pinyon-juniper less dense. Grasses cover substantial portions of the landscape, providing little vegetative screening.

**C. Primitive and Unconfined Recreation:** The 28,395 acre area recommended for wilderness designation, by virtue of its size, terrain diversity and vegetation, provides outstanding opportunities for primitive and unconfined recreation. The high ridge, steep canyons, and large boulders provide ample day and overnight hiking, camping and climbing or scrambling opportunities. Wildlife viewing includes mule deer, mountain lion, newly reintroduced bighorn sheep, golden eagles and prairie falcons. Hunting is known to occur along the flanks of the WSA, but the level of activity within the interior is unknown. Numerous steep-walled drainages cut across the mountain from east to west; precipitous cliffs create vantage points for hikers that provide an impressive view of huge empty desert valleys, interrupted only by successive intervening chains of even more distant mountains. Overlying this pattern is a jumbled mosaic of small to house-sized rounded tuff boulders, heavily interlaced with pinyon and juniper, occasional white fir and aspen. Backpackers and rock scramblers would enjoy challenging climbs that culminate in scenic overlooks atop these gargantuan geologic features. Within secluded forested pockets, campers and photographers might observe mule deer, mountain lion, bighorn sheep or a variety of raptors, including golden eagles and prairie falcons. Unique rounded rocks, columns, stone faces, balancing rocks which look like stacked bagels, and expansive scenery make interesting subjects for study and photography. These features combine to enhance the recreational values contained within the South Pahroc Range WSA. Within the area not recommended for wilderness designation, the opportunities for primitive and unconfined recreation are limited. The rolling bajada terrain and paucity of large boulders reduces the number of climbing and scrambling locales. Sparse stands of pinyon-juniper and open, grassy knolls provide few secluded locales for camping. Scenic vistas for sightseeing and nature photography are generally unavailable in this region.

**D. Special Features:** Several special features supplement the wilderness values of the 28,395 acres recommended for wilderness designation. This "island in the sky" is comprised of west-tilting layers of tuff that have weathered into the area's unique pockets, holes, columns and house-sized rounded tuff boulders. Opalescent feldspar crystals, obsidian "Apache tears", and perlite occur in local deposits and are of interest to specimen collectors. Living resources include the regionally rare white fir, aspen, prairie falcons, golden eagles, and mountain lions. Their presence in this WSA offers excellent opportunities for scientific observation. The scenic qualities of the South Pahroc Range are outstanding due, in part, to the interaction of the mountain landforms, the multi-colored rock stratigraphy, the variably-sized rounded boulders, diverse vegetation and vast, open vistas.

**4. MANAGEABILITY:**

The 28,395 acres recommended for wilderness designation can reasonably be managed to preserve the exceptional wilderness values now present in the area. The ruggedness of the terrain makes it inaccessible to motorized vehicles, and no mining claims exist within this area. Oil and gas leases extend into a small part of the western WSA; a low resource potential for oil and gas has been identified in this region and development of these leases is not anticipated to occur. The 205 acres in the northeast corner of the WSA not recommended for wilderness designation are judged not to be as easily managed for wilderness. The upland portions of this area are encumbered by pre-FLPMA mining claims which are projected to be developed as an extension of an operating perlite mine. The eastern fringes of this corner of the WSA are bajadas which would permit vehicular access to limited areas.

**5. ENERGY AND MINERAL RESOURCE VALUES**

The northeast portion of the WSA contains an identified, sub economic perlite resource of about 6 million tons. Three perlite placer claims lie partly within the study area. A localized area along the southeastern border of the WSA contains anomalous concentrations of gold, arsenic, and antimony and has moderate mineral resource potential for disseminated gold. It is unlikely that this resource will be developed. There is a low resource potential for oil and gas and no potential for geothermal energy resources in the WSA.

**6. SUMMARY OF WSA-SPECIFIC PUBLIC COMMENTS**

During formal public review of the draft EIS, a total of 157 comments specifically addressing this WSA were received. Of those, 157 were written and 3 were oral statements received at the two public hearings on the EIS. In general, 54 commentators supported more wilderness than the proposed action, 100 commentators supported the proposed action and three commentators supported less wilderness than the proposed action. Most comments which specifically mentioned the South Pahroc Range WSA touched on high wilderness values (naturalness, outstanding opportunities for solitude and primitive recreation), high scenic values (rugged rocky terrain, deep canyon topography and dense forest vegetation and the lack of conflicts with other resource uses. Comments opposing wilderness centered around conflicts with mineral potential of the WSA. County: No comments were received from county agencies or officials. State: The Governor of Nevada, in his consistency letter dated September 17, 1985, supported the Bureau's Preferred Alternative. The Nevada Department of Wildlife expressed concerns that wilderness designation could hinder the reintroduction of bighorn sheep and the development of water sources. If these problems could be resolved, this agency would support the Preferred Alternative. Federal: The U.S. Bureau of Mines suggested a boundary change along the east side of the study area to exclude the tuff unit containing perlite potential.

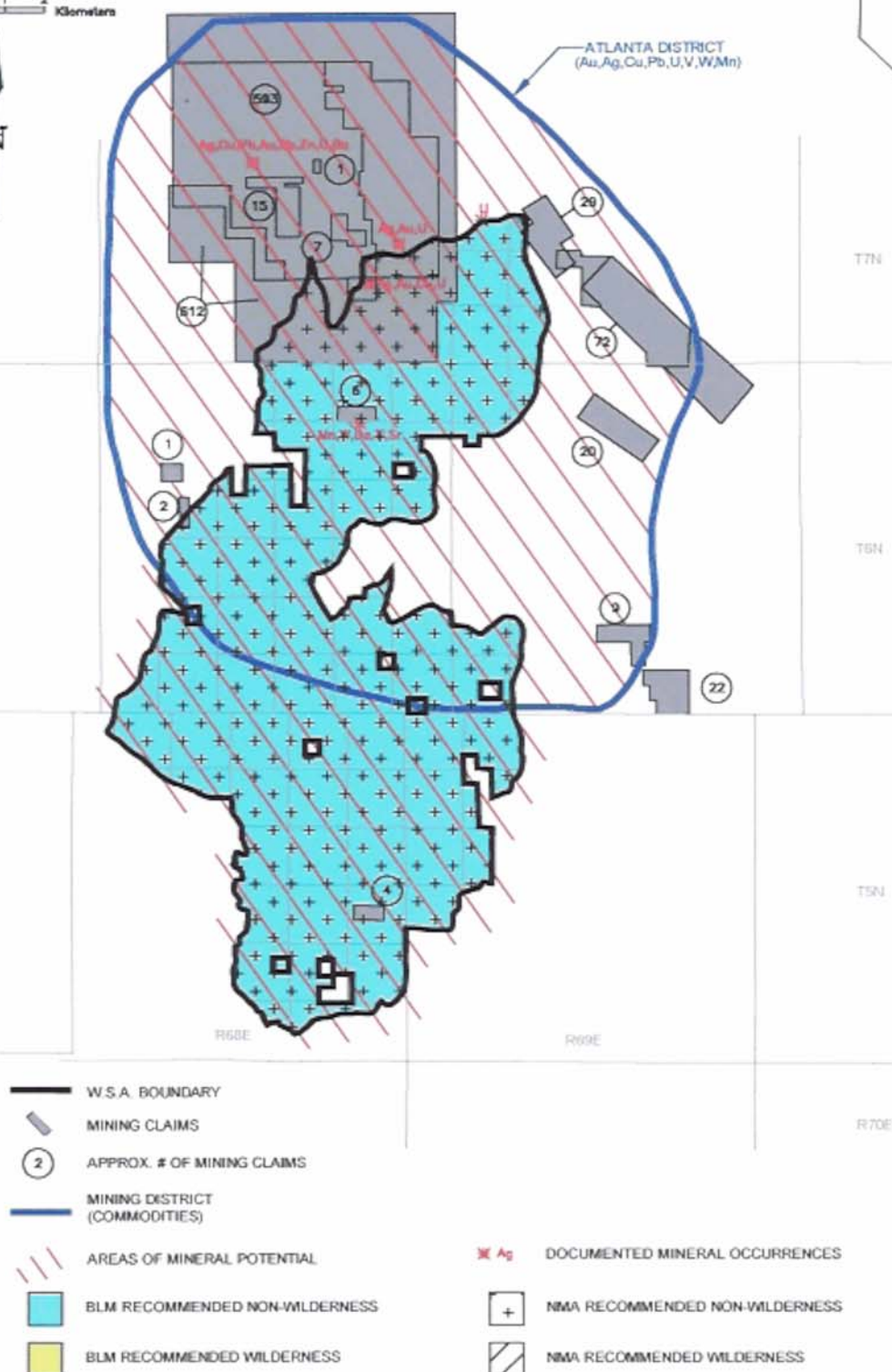


# TABLE MOUNTAIN NV-040-197

1 0 1 2 Miles  
1 0 1 2 Kilometers



ATLANTA DISTRICT  
(Au, Ag, Cu, Pb, U, V, W, Mn)



## **TABLE MOUNTAIN WILDERNESS STUDY AREA**

### **1. THE STUDY AREA - 35,958 acres**

The Table Mountain WSA (NV-040-197) is located in Lincoln County in east-central Nevada within the Wilson Creek Mountain Range. The WSA includes 35,958 acres of BLM lands and surrounds 400 acres of private lands. The nearest incorporated town is Pioche, Nevada, located 25 miles to the south. The boundary of the WSA is comprised of a series of connecting roads, jeep trails and private parcels. The northwestern boundary of the WSA is formed by the Atlanta-Lake Valley Road (County Road 431). The southwestern boundary of the unit is formed by the Mount Wilson Road (BLM road 4045). A 3.5-mile jeep trail completes this boundary by connecting the Atlanta-Lake Valley Road with the Mount Wilson Road. The southern and southeastern boundary is comprised of a 1/2-mile segment of the Bowling Fence and private parcel boundaries inter-connected by jeep trails. The central portion of the eastern boundary of the WSA is defined by a series of point-to-point connections and jeep trails circumventing unnatural features between private parcels. The northeastern boundary of the Table Mountain WSA is formed by the Rosencrans Creek Road. The northern boundary is formed by two jeep trails which connect the Rosencrans Creek Road with the Atlanta-Lake Valley Road. A 1/2-mile segment of this boundary is point-to-point between the terminal ends of the two jeep trails.

### **2. RECOMMENDATION AND RATIONALE - 0 acres recommended for wilderness 35,958 acres recommended for nonwilderness**

Comprised of the expansive northern portion of the Wilson Creek Range, the Table Mountain WSA encompasses a variety of subtle yet diverse landforms. The northern end of the WSA consists of the pinyon and juniper covered foothills and drainages on the north flank of Rosencrans Mountain one of a series of rocky peaks and knobs which spur off of the uplands of Table Mountain. The "Table", located in the central portion of the WSA is a high wind swept plateau covered with a mosaic of native grasses, mountain mahogany and manzanita. A central ridgeline in the WSA is separated from the "Table" by rocky, precipitous canyons. Within these canyons, spectacular scenic pockets of ponderosa pines nestle up against colorful volcanic cliff faces. From the central ridgeline, a jumbled array of conical peaks, most over 8,000 feet in elevation, spread out and form the forested southern half of the WSA. Bald eagles are often sighted during the winter in this well watered, rugged terrain. During the summer months, elk can be found dispersed throughout the WSA. Although scenic, the Table Mountain WSA was not recommended as wilderness for several reasons.

The foremost reason was the concern over managing the area as wilderness. There are eight parcels of private land within the boundaries of the WSA. Few of these parcels have any developed access to them. Because the private inholdings are tied to the water rights of springs and streams, private land owners may require adequate access to these parcels in the future. The development of access to the private parcels would impair the naturalness values of the WSA in their immediate vicinity. Acquisition of these private parcels would be a difficult and lengthy process because of the issues of water rights. Additionally, approximately 13 miles of the WSA boundary is based on 10 private parcels. Most of these parcels are not marked or fenced. Identification of the WSA boundary on the ground would be very difficult. The presence of these private parcels has resulted in an irregular configuration for the WSA with the center portion constricted and less than one-mile wide. Another manageability concern was that projected mineral exploration and development in the northern portion of the WSA would impair wilderness values regardless of wilderness designation. Gold-producing ore is intermittently processed at the Atlanta Mine, located three miles north of the WSA. While the Table Mountain WSA does offer outstanding opportunities for solitude, the wilderness inventory found that it lacked the same high level of recreation opportunities and offered few special features. The recommendation for the WSA was partially based on these lower wilderness values. Lastly, the Table Mountain WSA is one of four WSA's clustered within a radius of 25 miles. All of these WSA's are comprised of similar landforms and ecosystems. Two of these WSA's - Parsnip Peak (NV-040-206), also within the Wilson Creek Range and the White Rock Range (NV-040-202) - are recommended for wilderness designation.

### **3. WILDERNESS CHARACTERISTICS**

**A. Naturalness:** Nearly the entire Table Mountain WSA is in a natural condition. The central and southern portions are in an especially pristine condition. The central ridgeline in the WSA is separated from the 'Table' by rocky, precipitous canyons. Within these canyons, spectacular scenic pockets of ponderosa pines nestle up against colorful volcanic cliff faces. From the central ridgeline, a jumbled array of conical peaks, most over 8,000 feet in elevation, spread out and form the forested southern half of the WSA.

A few cherry stemmed roads and ways intrude into the area and affect the naturalness of the periphery, but are noticeable only when in their immediate proximity.

**B. Solitude:** The 'Table' portion of the WSA receives the most visitor use, while the remainder of the WSA is virtually unknown and infrequently visited. Topography characterized by numerous peaks, jutting outcrops, steep drainages and vegetative screening of thick forest cover allow for outstanding opportunities for solitude. There are no destination points in the WSA and the abundance of springs throughout the area would further serve to disperse visitors and minimize user contacts.

**C. Primitive and Unconfined Recreation:** Opportunities for recreation exist in the Table Mountain WSA, but fall short of "outstanding." These include most of the usual forms of recreation such as hiking, camping, horseback riding, nature study, and hunting (deer and upland game). Opportunities for some of these are limited in much of the area by the thick vegetative cover, which at times can become impenetrable maze of mountain brush. Once these barriers are overcome, hidden riparian areas only lightly grazed by elk are revealed and offer excellent destination points for visitors. Interesting rock formations, meadows, and ponderosa pine all enhance recreational opportunities. Wildlife is particularly abundant in portions of the WSA and includes mule deer, elk, and wintering bald eagles.

**D. Special Features:** The scenic quality of a small area within the central portion of the WSA is considered to be a special feature. This area offers the visitor a relatively pristine meadow complex, a healthy regeneration of ponderosa pine forest, and the beautifully sculptured hoodoo rock formations all found in close proximity to each other. Bald eagles which can be found roosting within the WSA in the winter time are also considered a special feature in the area.

**4. MANAGEABILITY** (the area must be capable of being managed to preserve its wilderness character) The Table Mountain WSA is unmanageable as wilderness. If it were designated wilderness, it is likely that the wilderness values of the area would be lost over the long term to incompatible but allowable uses. The first use of the land which would be incompatible with wilderness management is access development to the dispersed private inholdings in the south half of the WSA. The Wilderness Management Policy allows for reasonable development of access; and in the rugged terrain in which the private parcels are located, access development would likely be very impairing to naturalness and to opportunities for solitude. This area is expected to contain mineralization similar to that in the vicinity of the Atlanta Mine, 3 miles north of the WSA, where a disseminated gold deposit has been extensively mined resulting in massive areas of surface disturbance.

#### **5. ENERGY AND MINERAL RESOURCE VALUES**

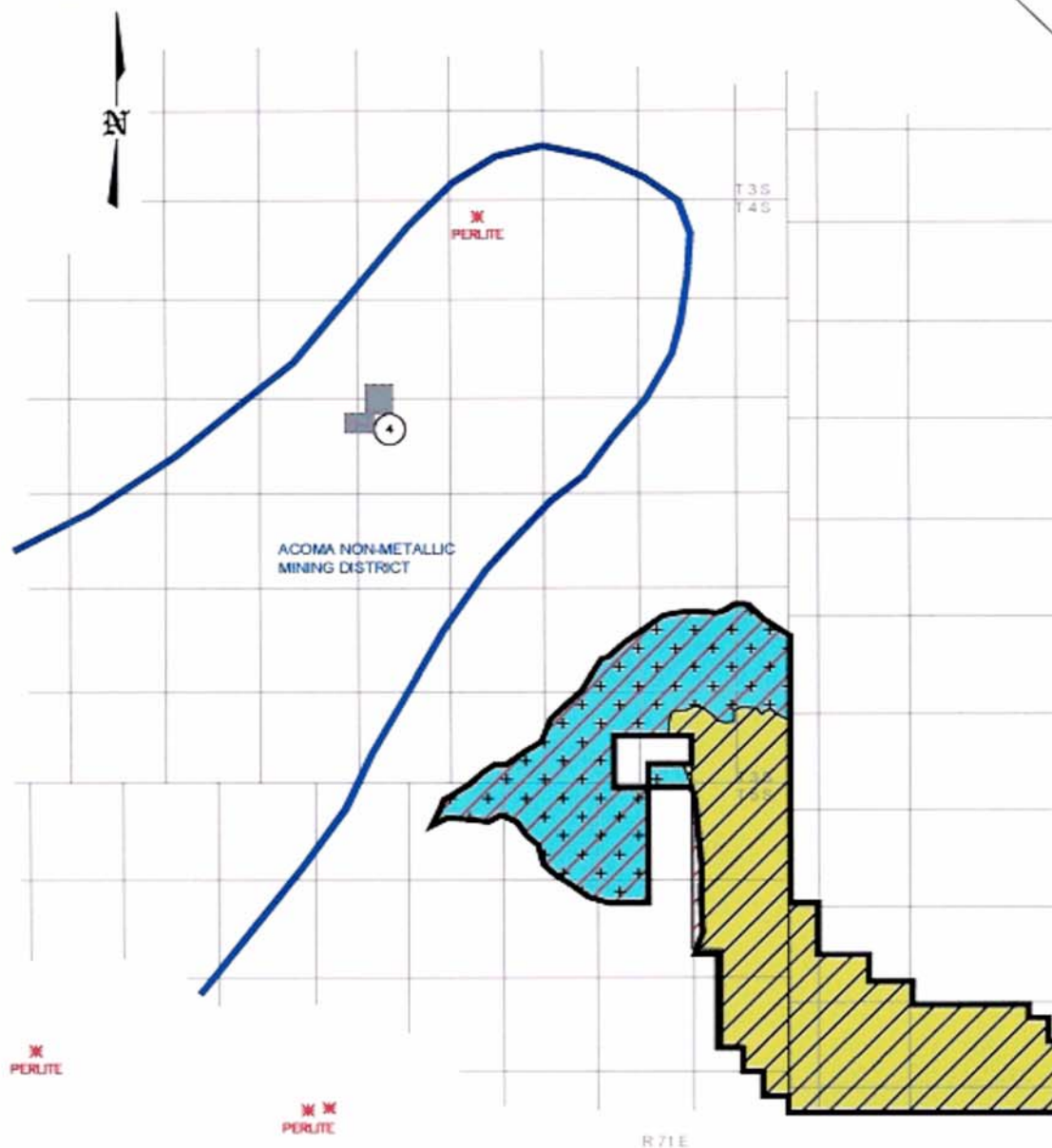
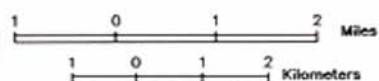
The 1983 GEM study evaluates the mineral and energy potential of the Table Mountain WSA. The study indicates that the entire WSA has moderate potential for the occurrence of metallic minerals. Potential for energy (oil, gas, geothermal) resources is low for the entire WSA (GEM,1983). Precious-metal mineralization occurs within the Atlanta/Silver Peak Mining District located just north of the WSA. The Atlanta mine has produced gold and silver in the past and is currently in operation on a sporadic basis. Precious-metal mineralization is also observed in the volcanics to the south of the Atlanta/Silver Peak District in the west-central portion of the WSA.

## **6. SUMMARY OF WSA-SPECIFIC PUBLIC COMMENTS**

During the inventory phase, one comment was received which raised the issue of livestock grazing conflicts. No other comments were received which raised issues needing to be analyzed during the study phase. There were a total of 35 comments received during the study process which mentioned the Table Mountain WSA. Of those, 21 supported the unit for wilderness designation citing the excellent hiking in the forests and undulating uplands, the solitude, archaeological sites and rare flora. The Nevada Division of Parks supports this unit as wilderness. Sixteen comments opposed wilderness designation stating they were generally opposed to wilderness, the unit had mineral potential for gold and silver, roads, intrusions and deeded property. The Nevada Departments of Wildlife and Agriculture opposed wilderness designation. During formal public review of the draft EIS and Wilderness Technical Report held between April 8 to July 8, 1983 a total of six comments were received specifically addressing the White Rock Range WSA. Of those, five were written comments and one was an oral testimony. In general, no comments specifically supported wilderness designation for all or part of the WSA; four commentors supported no wilderness for the WSA and one commenter took no position on designation. The Bureaus of Indian Affairs, Mines, and Reclamation, Fish and Wildlife Service, Environmental Protection Agency, National Park Service, and the Department of the Air Force all commented on the draft EIS. None of these agencies had a jurisdictional conflict with either of the alternatives. The Governor of Nevada as well as the State Divisions of State Lands, Parks, Forestry, and Historic Preservation and Archeology supported a no wilderness recommendation for the Table Mountain WSA, stating the unit "...has many resource conflicts." The Lincoln County Conservation District also opposed wilderness designation. One letter was received on the final EIS from the Environmental Protection Agency which supported the BLM's wilderness recommendation.



# COUGAR CANYON/TUNNEL SPRINGS NV-050-166



- |                                |  |
|--------------------------------|--|
| MINING DISTRICT (COMMODITIES)  | W.S.A. BOUNDARY                              |
| AREAS OF MINERAL POTENTIAL     | MINING CLAIMS (2) APPROX. # OF MINING CLAIMS |
| BLM RECOMMENDED NON-WILDERNESS | PERLITE DOCUMENTED MINERAL OCCURRENCES       |
| BLM RECOMMENDED WILDERNESS     | NMA RECOMMENDED NON-WILDERNESS               |
|                                | NMA RECOMMENDED WILDERNESS                   |

## **TUNNEL SPRING WILDERNESS STUDY AREA**

### **1. THE STUDY AREA -15,968 acres**

The Tunnel Spring WSA (NV-050-166, UT-040-123) is in northwestern Washington County, Utah, and northeastern Lincoln County, Nevada. The WSA includes 10,568 acres of public land in Utah (Cougar Canyon WSA) and 5,400 acres in Nevada. No State, private, or split estate lands are included. In Utah, the study area is bordered on the north and northeast by the Dixie National Forest. In Nevada, the WSA is adjacent to public lands and Beaver Dam State Park on the southwest. The WSA consists of steep, mountainous canyons, long ridges, and rough drainages. Various kinds of volcanic rocks predominate. The area is at the head of Beaver Dam Wash, and elevations range from 5,000 to 6,700 feet. Seven miles of perennial streams, six undeveloped springs, and one undeveloped spring are in the WSA. Vegetation is mostly pinyon-juniper and sagebrush. The climate is semiarid, with cold winters and warm summers.

### **2. RECOMMENDATION AND RATIONALE- 6,408 acres recommended for wilderness 9,560 acres recommended for nonwilderness**

The recommendation for this WSA is to designate 6,408 acres as wilderness and release 9,560 acres for uses other than wilderness. The recommendation differs from the proposed action listed in the Draft EIS. Public support for some wilderness designation of this WSA received during review of the Draft EIS prompted BLM to re-evaluate this area. This led to the development of the partial wilderness alternative which is now the proposed action in the Final EIS and the recommendation of this report.

The area recommended for wilderness designation includes all of the area with outstanding opportunities for solitude (1,300 acres) and primitive recreation (400 acres) and all of the highest visual qualities (5,400 acres). Cougars and a variety of raptors frequent the area. Rainbow trout, which are rare elsewhere in the vicinity, inhabit the streams. No conflicts exist with other uses. The area recommended is mostly the northeastern portion of the WSA and includes about 4,228 acres in Washington County, Utah, and 2,180 acres in Lincoln County, Nevada. The boundary is along section and sub-section lines that enclose the portion with the highest wilderness values. In the northwestern part of the WSA, not recommended for wilderness designation, there are no outstanding opportunities for primitive recreation, visual aspects are common, and diversity of terrain and vegetation is limited. The southern portion of the WSA lacks diversity and outstanding opportunities for primitive recreation.

### **3. WILDERNESS CHARACTERISTICS**

**A. Naturalness:** The entire WSA meets Wilderness Act criteria for naturalness. Human intrusion that existed when the WSA was identified included six miles of range fences, one small tree and shrub planting in 1971 at Tunnel Springs (Nevada portion) for erosion control, and one exclosure at Middle Ridge in the south end of the WSA for grazing studies. More recently, a total of about one acre in the WSA has been disturbed by one spring development and one half mile of fence. All of these disturbances have been reclaimed to a substantially unnoticeable condition.

**B. Solitude:** About 1,300 acres, all in the area recommended for wilderness designation, meet the criteria for outstanding opportunities for solitude. The tributaries and main canyons of the Pine Park-Split Pine Hollow, the tributaries and outcrops in the south rim of Pine Park Canyon, and the lower portion of Sheep Corral Canyon all provide topographic and vegetative screening of high quality. The remaining 14,668 acres of the WSA do not meet the standards for outstanding solitude. The size and configuration of the WSA neither enhance nor lessen opportunities for solitude and many of the canyons are too shallow or wide to provide topographic screening. The WSA is near the flight path for military aircraft from Nellis Air Force Base near Las Vegas. Subsonic flights by four aircraft at a time occur over the WSA as low as 100 feet above ground level, two or three times a week. Noise from the over flights detracts from solitude in the WSA.

**C. Primitive and Unconfined Recreation:** Only 400 acres, in the northern and eastern parts of the WSA, provide outstanding opportunities for primitive recreation. These areas, Pine Park Canyon and the eastern portion of Sheep Corral Canyon, are easily accessible from the Dixie National Forest Pine Park Campground and provide excellent hiking in conjunction with opportunities for scenic viewing, fishing, bird watching, wading, picnicking, and photography. These areas are too rugged for horseback riding however, and are not ideal for big game hunting because of rough terrain. Opportunities for primitive recreation are not outstanding in the remaining 15,568 acres (97 percent of the WSA). Dixie National Forest and Beaver Dam State Park, east and west of the WSA respectively, are relatively heavily used for recreation but few people enter the WSA, perhaps because of the rugged terrain and an assumption that it lacks recreational opportunities.

**D. Special Features:** Five to seven miles of streams in the WSA support trout fisheries, which are unusual in BLM lands in the surrounding desert region. These fisheries are in perennial waters in Beaver Dam Wash and are the only native reproducing fisheries in the area. Candidate threatened or endangered species include the Virgin River spinedace which, with the speckled dace and desert sucker, may inhabit Beaver Dam Creek and its tributaries. The ferruginous hawk, Swainson's hawk, southern spotted owl, long-billed curlew, mountain plover, western snowy plover, western yellow-billed cuckoo, white-faced ibis, Arizona Bell's vireo, and Merriam's kangaroo rat are also resident species.

#### **4. MANAGEABILITY**

Tunnel Spring WSA can reasonably be managed as wilderness to preserve values present. The WSA is rugged, relatively remote, and currently has only low to moderate recreational use (500 annual visitor days, of which 125 are vehicular). No ways penetrate the WSA, vegetation is too sparse to provide woodland products, and mineral-related conflicts are unlikely. Livestock grazing could continue in accordance with the applicable BLM land use plans. Wilderness designation would strengthen current management efforts to protect the Beaver Dam watershed and provide wildlife habitat. Military over flights may continue, depending on Air Force needs and decisions. If the flights continue, the resulting distraction could not be mitigated by BLM administrative actions. The 9,560 acre portion not recommended for wilderness designation would continue to be managed under applicable BLM plans. No change in management is anticipated if the area is released from wilderness study status. Current plans propose watershed and wildlife habitat improvements, keeping the area open for off road vehicle use, and maintaining 1,088 acres as public water reserves.

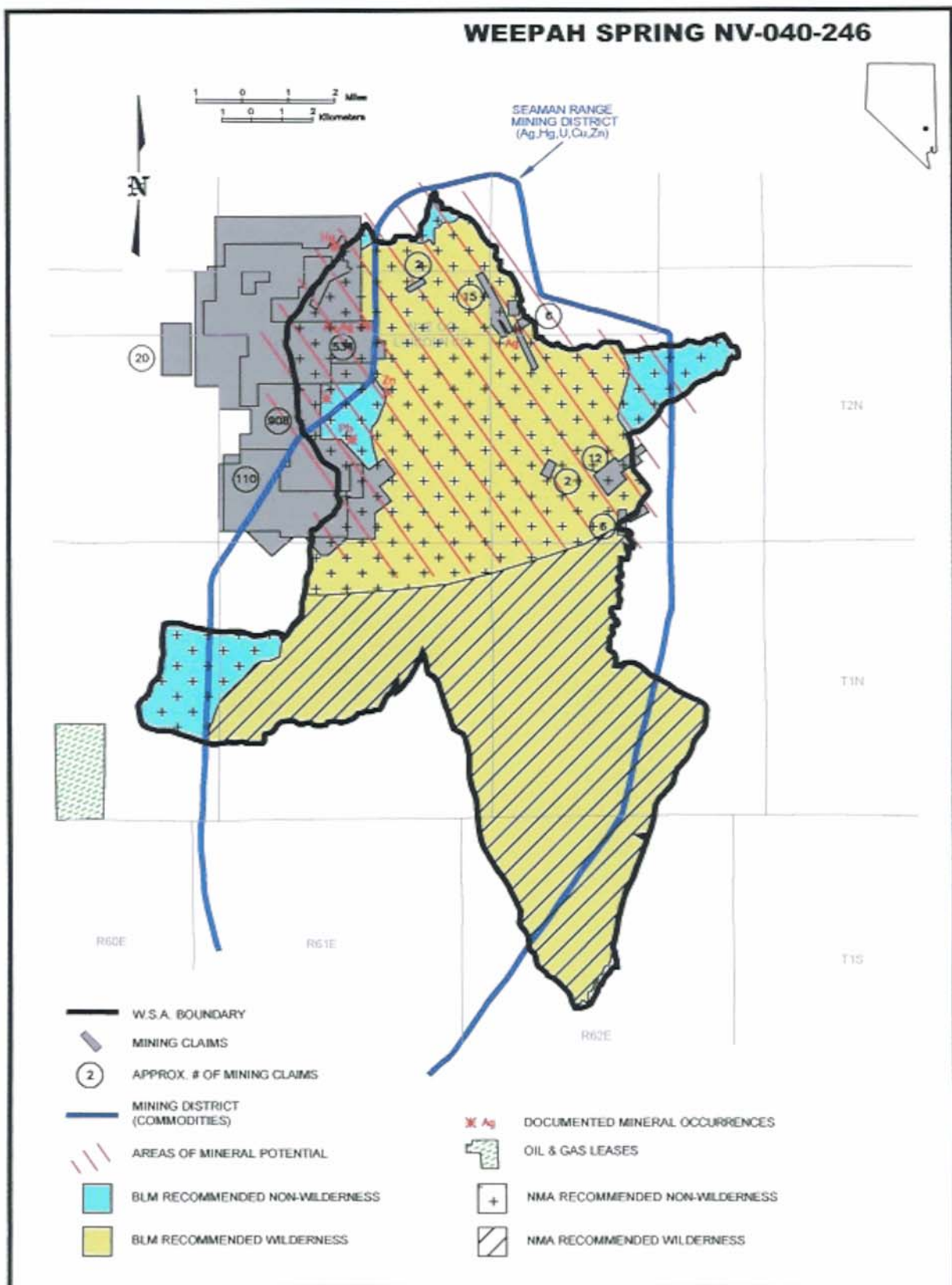
#### **5. ENERGY AND MINERAL RESOURCE VALUES**

The WSA is composed of volcanic rocks which are thought to be relatively thick. Because significant mineral resources are rarely found in volcanic rocks and because of the absence of mineral production and past interest in the area, there is little likelihood that any mineral resources exist in the WSA or that mineral-related activity will occur.

#### **6. SUMMARY OF WSA-SPECIFIC PUBLIC COMMENTS**

During formal public review of the draft EIS, a total of 57 inputs specifically addressing this WSA were received, including 17 oral statements received at public hearings on the EIS. In general, 59 commentors supported wilderness designation for part or all of the WSA, 10 were opposed, and 5 commentors addressed the relative merits of the EIS, but took no formal position on wilderness designation. Those favoring wilderness commented on the special features in the WSA and the protection of wildlife and wildlife habitat that wilderness designation would offer. The majority of those commenting were from other states. Those opposing wilderness did not have a consensus opinion. The majority were from rural Utah. One Federal agency and the State of Utah commented on the draft EIS. Neither favored a particular alternative. The Washington County Commission (Utah) opposes wilderness designation for this WSA.

# WEEPAH SPRING NV-040-246





## **WEEPAH SPRING WILDERNESS STUDY AREA**

### **1. THE STUDY AREA - 61,137 acres**

The Weepah Spring WSA (NV-040-246) is located in east-central Nevada within Lincoln County. The entire WSA is comprised of 61,137 acres of public land with no private or State inholdings. This WSA is located in the Seaman Range, about 120 miles north of Las Vegas, and 90 miles south of Ely, Nevada. Alamo, Nevada the nearest incorporated town, is located approximately 35 miles to the south. The western boundary of the WSA is mostly formed by a dirt road that traverses north-south along the eastern alluvial benches of Coal Valley. Portions of this boundary are also based on jeep trails, unnatural features, and geographic features. The southwest boundary is formed by a road which follows an unnamed arroyo draining into the White River Narrows. The southeast boundary parallels about 7 miles of Nevada State Highway 318. The eastern boundary is delineated by the 5600 foot contour line which connects the terminal ends of several jeep trails. Additional roads and jeep trails form the remaining portion of the eastern and northeastern boundary. Two jeep trails intersecting the Timber Mountain Pass Road and connected by the 6200 foot contour line form the northern boundary of the WSA.

### **2. RECOMMENDATION AND RATIONALE - 50,499 acres recommended for wilderness 10,638 acres recommended for nonwilderness**

The recommendation for the Weepah Spring WSA is to designate 50,499 acres as wilderness and 10,638 acres for uses other than wilderness. A portion of the WSA was recommended for wilderness due to its high wilderness values including high scenic qualities and an abundance of special features, and a limited amount of competing resource uses. The area recommended for wilderness is an excellent, unspoiled example of mountain ranges representative of the Great Basin. A great variety of topographic relief, combined with diverse and sometimes unusual flora in a large, seemingly unconfined setting, provides outstanding opportunities for solitude, as well as excellent recreational opportunities. These are enhanced by the high scenic value of the area and its wealth of special features. In addition, the portion recommended for wilderness is easily managed as wilderness. Portions of the WSA that have high mineral potential or consist of alluvial slopes and lower foothills with scant vegetation relatively lower wilderness values. Eliminating these areas from the proposed wilderness improves the configuration of the WSA as a whole, making it more compact without odd shaped stringers. The proposed wilderness boundary was drawn to eliminate as much of the area with high mineral potential and existing mining claims as possible, while still keeping a manageable and identifiable boundary.

### **3. WILDERNESS CHARACTERISTICS**

**A. Naturalness:** Nearly all of the Weepah Spring WSA is in a pristine condition. Access is restricted for the most part to the fringes of the area and the ruggedness of the WSA has served to keep man's intrusions to a minimum. On the west side of the WSA, a small, unnatural area has been cherry stemmed out of the unit but remains encircled by it. A small spring facility lies within the WSA at Weepah Spring. Cherry-stemmed routes, primitive in nature, penetrate the boundary of the WSA on the southeast. All these unnatural features are minor, peripheral, and do not affect in any way the outstanding naturalness of the area as a whole.

**B. Solitude:** Outstanding opportunities for solitude exist in abundance within the portion of the Weepah Spring WSA recommended for wilderness. The large size of the area and the breadth of the Seaman Range and Timber Mountain which make up the WSA, are primarily responsible for the outstanding solitude. These mountains consist of individual peaks and a myriad of canyons, creating a maze-like character that could host a large number of users and still provide outstanding solitude. Its remoteness from populations, and its excellent topographic and vegetative screening all contribute to an environment where visitors can totally remove themselves from the sights and sounds of man. Opportunities for solitude in the recommended nonwilderness portions of the WSA, are of lower quality due to the open, unscreened nature of much of the acreage.

**C. Primitive and Unconfined Recreation:** The wilderness inventory determined that opportunities for recreation are very good in the WSA but are less than outstanding. Specific opportunities for recreation include backpacking, hiking, and camping. Nature study in this undisturbed, unusual area is excellent. Horseback riding in the more open southern part of the WSA is very good. Hunting and trapping opportunities occur in various portions of the area. Recreation opportunities are excellent throughout the core of the WSA from the forested areas to the eroded volcanic cliffs. Recreational opportunities diminish in quality along the bench and valley areas within the recommended nonwilderness portions.

**D. Special Features:** The scenic values of the Seaman Range are high due to the great diversity of geologic features present, and these serve as a special feature of the WSA. Although most stands of ponderosa in eastern Nevada are relict stands, this one is unique in that active regeneration is obvious where young saplings grow next to trees over 3 feet in diameter. As perhaps the largest stand of ponderosa pine in eastern Nevada, the area serves as an important source of genetic diversity and contributes as a special feature with scientific, scenic, and educational value that enhances the area's wilderness value. The White River Narrows Archaeological District, listed on the National Register of Historic Places, lies within the southern portion of the WSA and represents one of the largest and most well-known petroglyph concentrations in eastern Nevada. Other prehistoric sites exist within the WSA including shelter caves, hunting blinds and open camp sites. The Seaman Range wild horse herd range into the WSA along its western flank and southern foothills. For many persons, especially those who would use the area for wilderness recreation, wild horses are part of and enhance the diversity of wilderness experience.

#### **4. MANAGEABILITY**

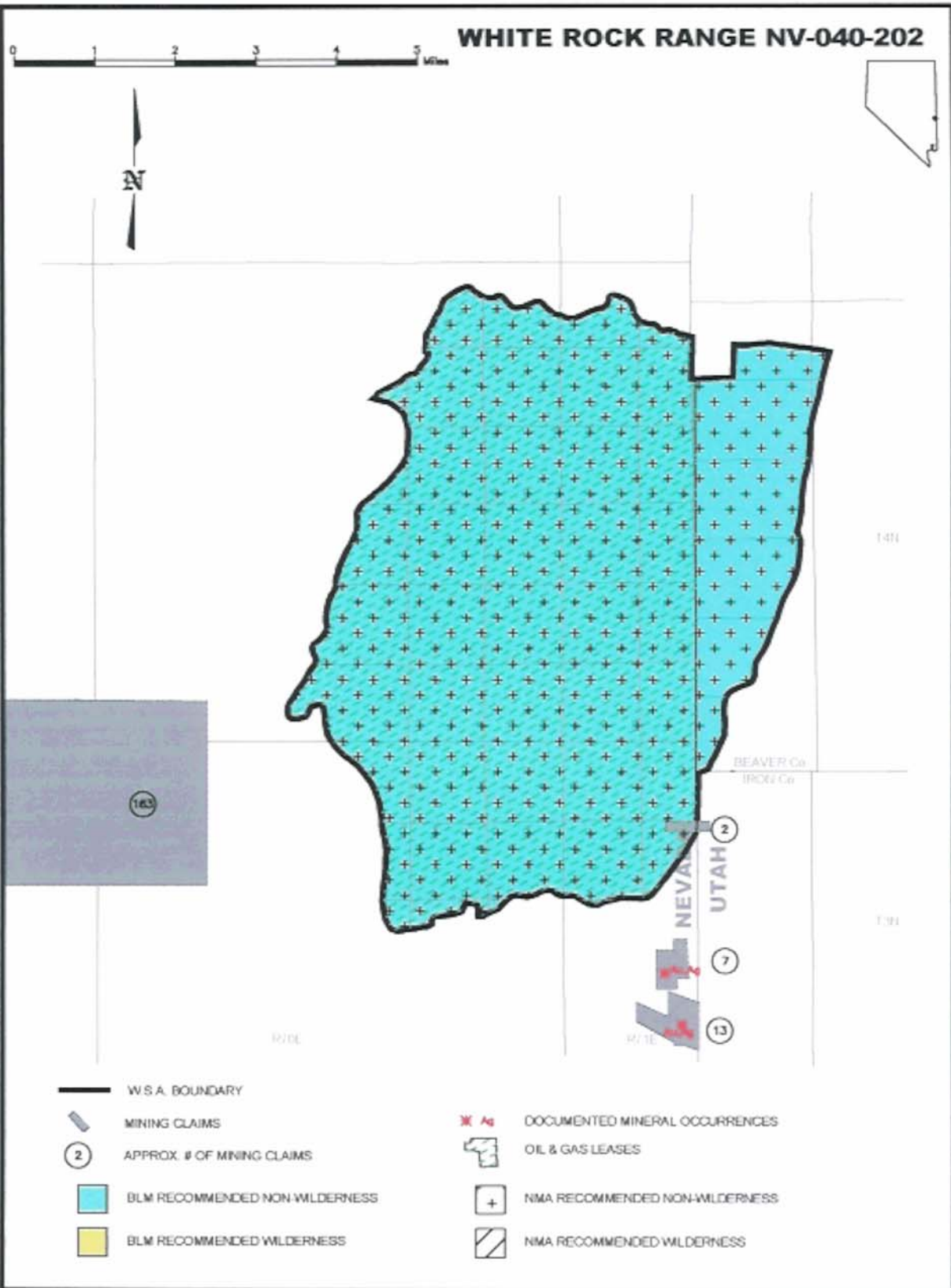
All but the northwest portion of the WSA is manageable as wilderness in the long term. The lack of private or State inholdings, the relatively self protecting rugged nature of the WSA, and the lack of competing resource values throughout most of the WSA ensure manageability of the area. Several slight manageability concerns have, however, affected the configuration of the recommended wilderness area. The northwest portion of the WSA has been identified by as having a high potential for disseminated gold. Wilderness values would be lost in this portion of the WSA for the long term if mineral deposits are located and developed.

#### **5. ENERGY AND MINERAL RESOURCE VALUES**

The U.S. Geological Survey and the Bureau of Mines prepared a mineral assessment report for the Weepah Spring WSA in 1987, (U.S. Geological Survey Bulletin 1728-E). The report indicated that the majority of the WSA has low potential for metallic mineral resources. An area of high potential for undiscovered deposits of disseminated gold and associated mercury is located on the western fringe of the unit. Past mining activity has occurred at the FNB and Red Head claim groups within this area. Two very small localized areas on the eastern boundary are considered to possess moderate potential for mineral resources (gold, silver, copper, lead and zinc) associated with epithermal vein deposits. These areas have not been subject to prior mining activity or exploration.

#### **6. SUMMARY OF WSA-SPECIFIC PUBLIC COMMENTS**

During the inventory phase two comments were received that mentioned other resource conflicts. One mentioned a conflict with livestock grazing, and the other mentioned mineral potential. During public review of the draft wilderness recommendation, a total of 16 comments were received specifically addressing the Weepah Spring WSA. In general, 13 commentors supported wilderness designation for all or part of the WSA, two commentors supported no wilderness for the WSA while one commenter mentioned the Weepah Spring WSA but took no formal position on wilderness designation. The main points mentioned in support of this area as wilderness were the large stand of virgin ponderosa pine, wilderness values far outweigh the mineral potential, and that boundaries should be increased to include more land. The main points mentioned in favor of reducing the suitable portion were: the area's mineral potential, its limited access would protect it without wilderness designation, the northern boundaries should be reduced because of mineralization, and the boundaries should be pulled a half mile from US Highway 318. The Governor of Nevada as well as the State Divisions of State Lands, Parks, Forestry, and Historic Preservation and Archeology, supported the area for wilderness but recommended the northwest corner be pulled back "to avoid what appears to be a substantial resource conflict." The Nevada Department of Wildlife supported the area as wilderness as well. The Lincoln County Conservation District opposed wilderness because of the area's mineralization and the limited access which will keep the southern portion of the unit wilderness. One letter was received on the final wilderness recommendation from the Environmental Protection Agency which supported BLM's proposal.



## **WHITE ROCK RANGE WILDERNESS STUDY AREA**

### **1. THE STUDY AREA - 24,065 acres**

The White Rock Range WSA (NV-040-202) is mostly located in Lincoln County in the east-central portion of Nevada along the Nevada-Utah border. A portion of the WSA lies within the State of Utah on the western boundaries of Beaver and Iron Counties. The nearest communities are Ursine, Nevada (pop. 100) about 15 miles to the southwest; and Pioche, Nevada (pop. 800) about 25 miles to the southwest. The entire WSA is comprised of public land with no private inholdings. The boundaries of the White Rock Range WSA are formed on the southwest by a fence line, on the west by the White Rock Wash jeep trail, on the north by two jeep trails, a legal boundary and a parcel of Utah State land. The southern and eastern boundaries are defined by the Reeds Cabin Summit Road.

### **2. RECOMMENDATION AND RATIONALE - 24,065 acres recommended for wilderness 0 acres recommended for nonwilderness**

The White Rock Range was recommended for wilderness because of its high degree of naturalness and solitude, the ease of management, and the lack of conflicts. The WSA is made up of gentle mountain terrain with associated foothills and benchlands. The broad, north-south trending range is dissected by numerous side canyons and drainages. Elevations range from over 9,000 feet to about 6,100 feet. Most of the WSA is forested with juniper, pinyon, and fir woodland. The north end, however, exhibits some interesting differences, including high open sagebrush country, ponderosa pines, white fir, aspen and two high (but intermittent) mountain lakes. Interspersed throughout the area are numerous small grassy meadows where springs support riparian vegetation. The pristine nature of the WSA is apparent throughout. On the northern end, the ridge flattens into a high, broad windswept table interrupted only by pockets of aspen and fir. Large aspen trees, twisted and contorted by wind and weather provide for interesting photo opportunities. Volcanic boulders, colorful with splotches of lichens are strewn across the table. Signs of elk and deer are abundant. Although hidden in many places by vegetation, the volcanic nature of the range is often apparent. Islands of strangely eroded volcanic ash and columnar peaks thrust out of and tower over the sea of green trees. Solitude is the primary wilderness value. Heavy tree cover, combined with jumbled mountain topography, results in outstanding opportunities for solitude. The area is notable for its large number of springs which enhance opportunities for backpacking, camping, and hiking. The relatively large amount of riparian acreage supported by these provides habitat for a large variety of animal species and this diversity of flora and fauna provides good opportunities for nature study. The WSA's blocky configuration is ideal for management and requires no boundary modification. Also leading to the wilderness recommendation is the fact that conflicts with other resource uses of this WSA are low. The USGS/BM mineral survey showed the area to have low potential for metallic minerals, oil, gas, and geothermal resources. Although the White Rock Range has good potential for commercial woodland product harvest, ample areas exist outside of the WSA to meet foreseeable demand.



### **3. WILDERNESS CHARACTERISTICS**

**A. Naturalness:** The pristine nature of the remote White Rock Range WSA is apparent throughout. Visitors have infrequently explored this little known area and few signs of man can be found. The only unnatural features are five ways, none of which are more than a mile in length, and all but one of which are well screened by dense forest cover.

**B. Solitude:** The opportunities for solitude in this WSA are outstanding. The WSA's vegetative screening is exceptional, provided by an almost uninterrupted forest of pinyon and juniper, with a scattering of other conifers. This, combined with good topographic screening provided by the mountains themselves, as well as a good unit configuration, allow for outstanding solitude opportunities just about anywhere within the area.

**C. Primitive and Unconfined Recreation:** Opportunities for recreation were found to be good but less than outstanding during the wilderness inventory. Current recreational opportunities such as hiking, camping, trapping, deer hunting, blue grouse hunting, and rock hounding are found throughout the WSA. About 18,000 acres of the area are crucial deer summer range. In addition, the White Rock Range is notable for its large number of springs which enhance opportunities for backpacking, camping, and hiking. The relatively large amount of riparian acreage supported by these springs provides habitat for numerous animal species. This diversity of flora and fauna provides good opportunities for nature study.

**D. Special Features:** The original wilderness inventory did not list any special features. After completion of the inventory however, an elk herd of about 20-30 animals set up residence. The elk use the northern portion of the WSA and seeing these animals enhances the visitor's wilderness experience. They are now considered a special feature of the WSA.

**4. MANAGEABILITY** (the area must be capable of being managed to preserve its wilderness character) The White Rock Range WSA is easily manageable as wilderness. The boundaries of the unit are easily found on the ground. There are no private inholdings in the area and no mineral leases. Cherry stemmed routes are few, and well screened by tree cover.

### **5. ENERGY AND MINERAL RESOURCE VALUES**

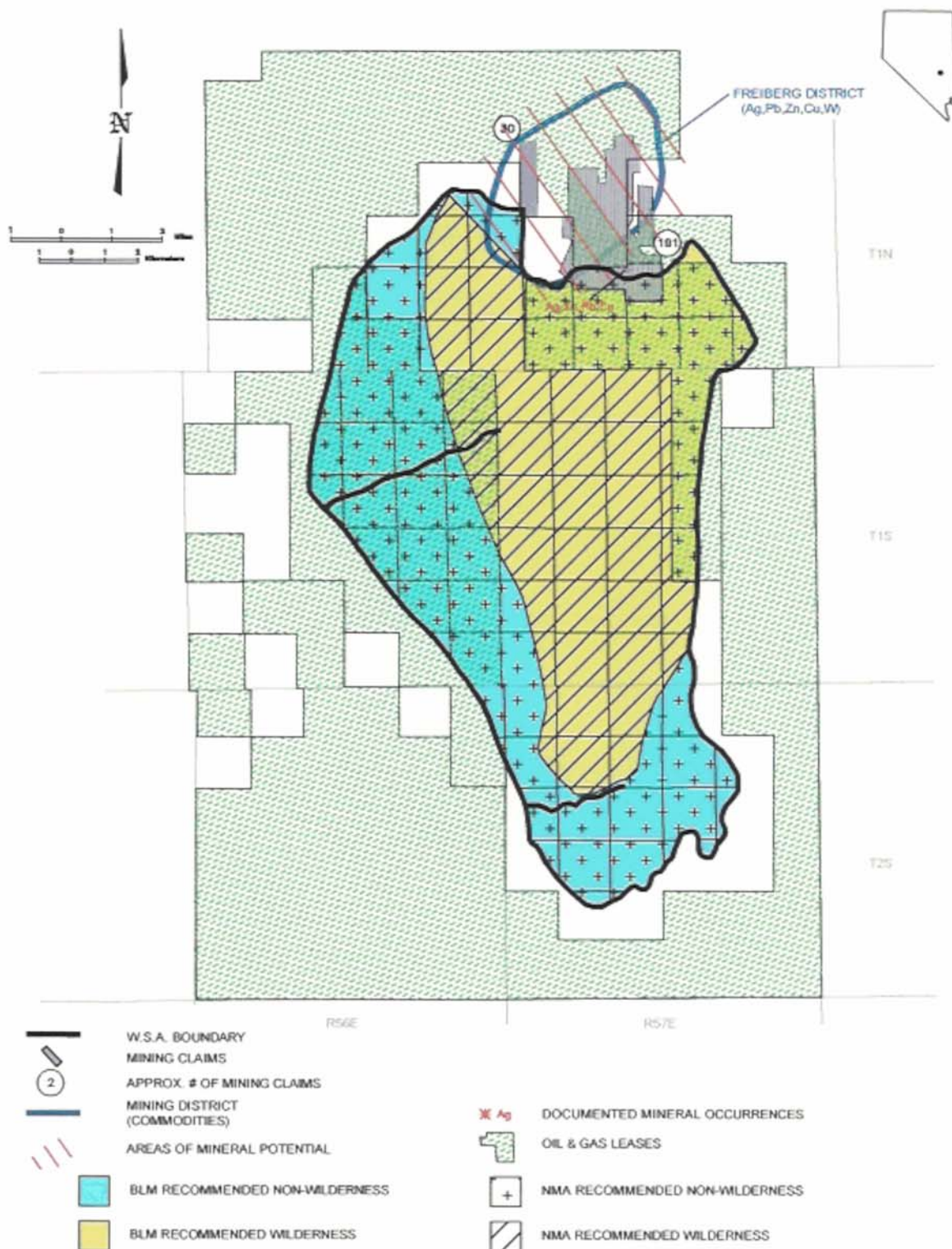
The U.S Geological Survey and the Bureau of Mines prepared a mineral assessment report for the White Rock Range WSA in 1986, (U.S. Geological Survey Bulletin 1728-B). The report indicates that the White Rock Range WSA has no identified mineral resources and has low mineral resource potential for metals. The report also states that the potential for oil, gas, coal, and geothermal energy resources within the unit is low.

The 1983 GEM study differs from the recent evaluation of the USGS/BM report. The GEM study rated the WSA as having moderate potential for mineral resources, with a low certainty factor.

## **6. SUMMARY OF WSA-SPECIFIC PUBLIC COMMENTS**

During formal public review of the draft EIS and Wilderness Technical Report held between April 8 to July 8, 1983 a total of 10 comments were received specifically addressing the White Rock Range WSA. Of those, 3 six were written comments and four were oral testimonies. In general, six commentors supported wilderness designation for all or part of the WSA and three commentors supported no wilderness for the WSA and one commenter took no position on designation. Specific comments opposing wilderness designation stated there were private lands and water holdings within the unit, current recreational access routes, and that options for wildlife habitat improvement should remain open. The Bureau of Indian Affairs, Bureau of Mines, Bureau of Reclamation, Fish and Wildlife Service, Environmental Protection Agency, National Park Service, and the Department of the Air Force all commented on the draft EIS. None of these agencies had a jurisdictional conflict with either of the alternatives. The Governor of Nevada as well as the State Divisions of State Lands, Parks, Forestry, and Historic Preservation and Archeology supported a no wilderness recommendation for the White Rock Range WSA, stating the unit "lacks really positive and unique wilderness values." The Nevada Department of Wildlife opposes wilderness designation because of current recreational access routes and to keep management options open for range improvements. The Lincoln County Conservation District opposes wilderness designation stating it "has several old roads and has high potential for vegetation improvements" for wildlife and livestock. One letter was received on the final EIS from the Environmental Protection Agency which supported the BLM's wilderness recommendation.

# WORTHINGTON MOUNTAINS NV-040-242



## **WORTHINGTON MOUNTAINS WILDERNESS STUDY AREA**

### **1. THE STUDY AREA - 47,633 acres**

The Worthington Mountains WSA (NV-040-242) is located in a remote part of the Ely District within Lincoln County in east-central Nevada. The nearest paved highway is about 15 miles to the south, and the nearest incorporated town is Alamo, Nevada, approximately 38 miles southeast. The WSA is comprised entirely of public land with no private or State inholdings. Most of the boundary is comprised of dirt roads and jeep trails. The east boundary of the WSA is formed by a mile and a half portion of County Road 433 which connects to the Freiburg Well-Rhodes Spring Road on the west side of Garden Valley. An unnamed jeep trail along the southern terminus of the Worthington Mountains forms the southern boundary of the WSA. A dirt road traversing north-south along the alluvial slopes in Sand Spring Valley is the WSA's western boundary. The northern boundary is formed by a combination of connecting roads, section lines and unnatural man-made features near the Freiberg mining area.

### **2. RECOMMENDATION AND RATIONALE - 26,587 acres recommended for wilderness 21,046 acres recommended for nonwilderness**

The recommendation for the Worthington Mountains WSA is to designate 26,587 acres as wilderness and release 21,046 acres for uses other than wilderness. The recommendation is based on the rugged wilderness values present, the lack of competing uses or other resource values, ease of management, and public support. The incredibly steep nature of the WSA hinders almost every competing use, and the lack of private or State inholdings helps eliminate potential conflicts in the future. It is this imposing character that provides an outstanding diversity of opportunities for recreation for those willing to seek them out. Foremost among these opportunities leading to a wilderness recommendation are the spelunking opportunities in Leviathan Cave. Also included in the recommendation area are the eastern alluvial approaches of the Worthington Range which are almost totally free of man's imprints. This particular landform received strong public support which led to the wilderness recommendation. Ordinarily, alluvial bajadas are excluded because of unnaturalness or unmanageability; however, the contiguity of this feature compliments the wilderness values of the mountain range as it provides the basin portion of the basin and range province. The relative ease of management also contributed to the recommendation. With the exception of a few mining claims in the northern portion of the WSA, interest in other land uses within the WSA is low. Several portions of the WSA were recommended for uses other than wilderness due to relatively lower wilderness values, numerous unnatural features, and manageability concerns. These areas contain noticeable roads, ways, pipelines and fence along the sparsely vegetated west bench and detract from the area's naturalness. In addition, the roads penetrating this portion allow easy access into the surrounding unroaded areas. Use would likely continue, creating additional ways even if the area were designated as wilderness. A low foothill area contributes little to the wilderness values of the area, and is physically separated from the mountain range by a canyon through which a road passes to Stink Bug Spring. Another small area is not recommended for wilderness because it is cut off from the rest of the WSA by a way that is used as access to private land just north of the WSA.



### **3. WILDERNESS CHARACTERISTICS**

**A. Naturalness:** The mountainous portion of this WSA which is recommended for wilderness has been maintained in a pristine condition largely due to the extremely rugged nature of the terrain as well as its remoteness from human populations. As a result, most of the area shows little sign of the presence of man. The east bench, also recommended for wilderness, is totally free of manmade features except for three faint ways created solely by the occasional passage of vehicles associated with livestock grazing. The more open west bench, recommended for uses other than wilderness has pipelines, a fence line, and numerous roads and ways are present. While the impact of these intrusions does not greatly affect the overall natural appearance of the bench, they do significantly affect limited portions due to the straight-line configuration of the structures and roads. The lack of good screening on the sloping, low sage-covered bench contributes to the unnatural visual effect of these intrusions.

**B. Solitude:** The opportunities for solitude in the Worthington Mountains are good but not considered outstanding. Although the configuration of the WSA is several miles broad, the mountain range itself is a single narrow ridge and use would tend to concentrate along its spine. Excellent topographic screening is provided by the many side canyons but in most cases vegetative screening is sparse. Most wilderness use will tend to center around Leviathan Cave, since most people who commit the time and effort to visit the area will wish to see its best known feature. The extensive hike required to reach this destination point, however, will serve to limit use. Whether around Leviathan Cave or along the relatively open and passable ridgeline, visitors are not likely to run into many other users because of the remote and inaccessible nature of the WSA. Solitude is adversely affected by the frequent U.S. Air Force low level flight training over the WSA. Training is both subsonic and supersonic, and sometimes occurs below 500 feet above ground level.

**C. Primitive and Unconfined Recreation:** Outstanding opportunities for recreation exist in the portion of the WSA recommended for wilderness. Leviathan Cave provides outstanding opportunities for spelunking with many different cave features. The arduous climb to the cave from the base of the mountain is itself an adventure which forms an integral part of the experience of the cave. The craggy nature of the peaks along the ridgeline interspersed with contorted conifers and lichen covered rocks, hidden pockets of ponderosa pines in the drainages, provide a remote setting in which high quality opportunities for hiking, nature study, primitive backpacking, camping, rock climbing, and photography can be enjoyed. This is a different kind of wilderness. Its appeal doesn't come from brilliant fall color or high mountain streams. Instead, austerity and ruggedness are its hallmarks. The nonwilderness portion of the WSA offers recreation opportunities of a much lower quality than the area recommended for wilderness because it is unforested and relatively featureless and exists more as a barrier to be crossed to achieve access to the mountains rather than as a recreation destination.



**D. Special Features:** There are three known caves more than 100 feet deep in the extensive limestone deposits of the WSA. Leviathan Cave, already described, is the largest of these. Jinx and Lavender Caves are much smaller and are located in the same part of the mountain range as is Leviathan Cave. Potential is very high for the discovery of additional caves. Bristlecone pines occur in the higher elevations of the Worthington Mountains WSA, widely and sparsely scattered over at least 2,000 acres. Among those which have been dated in the area, the oldest is over 2,100 years old. Scattered ponderosa pines occur in the north end of the WSA and although not an unusual species, their occurrence in this part of Nevada is noteworthy. Although the WSA has never undergone an archaeological inventory, several prehistoric artifacts have been reported. Among these are an Indian sandal, a metate, and a hunting blind.

#### **4. MANAGEABILITY**

The area recommended for wilderness and nonwilderness are manageable as wilderness in the long term with little cost or effort. There are no private lands located within the entire WSA. Slight manageability problems could be met in the north end of the WSA where it abuts the Freiburg Mining District. Currently there is no production from the area and exploration interest is very low; however, claims staked throughout the mining district overlap onto the area recommended for wilderness. The eastern alluvial approaches included in the recommended wilderness are open, sagebrush covered country. Manageability of this area presents little difficulty due to the absence of competing resource uses (except livestock grazing) and the lack of existing access and limited traffic in the valley. The nonwilderness areas would be manageable, but with some difficulty. Several access routes penetrate deeply into the area, lending easy access to unroaded adjacent areas. The relative remoteness of this area from administrative headquarters would incur high costs for ground patrol. Aerial reconnaissance patrols would be conducted at some risk since this airspace is an active military operating area.

#### **5. ENERGY AND MINERAL RESOURCE VALUES**

The U.S. Geological Survey and the Bureau of Mines prepared a mineral assessment for the Worthington Mountains WSA in 1987 (U.S. Geological Survey Bulletin 1728-A). The report rates the majority of the area recommended for wilderness as having a low potential for the occurrence of all metals. One small area flanking Worthington Peak on the north end of the area recommended for wilderness was identified as having moderate potential for the occurrence of base (copper, lead, zinc) and precious (silver and gold) metals. The mineral potential is associated with limestone replacement deposits which are known to occur within the Freiburg Mining District adjacent to the WSA. Most surface deposits have been mined, and small underground deposits are not economically attractive. Energy resources are unknown in this region and the geologic environment is not favorable for the occurrence of these resources.

## **6. SUMMARY OF WSA-SPECIFIC PUBLIC COMMENTS**

During the inventory phase two comments were received mentioning that there are mineral values present in the WSA. Issues raised during the study phase included the presence of wilderness values such as spelunking in Leviathan Cave, the scenic limestone cliffs, bristlecone pine and bighorn sheep habitat, and mineral potential. During public review of draft wilderness recommendations 31 comments were received specifically addressing the Worthington Mountains WSA. In general, all 31 commentors supported wilderness designation for all or part of the WSA. The main points mentioned in support of this area as wilderness were outstanding limestone ridges, Leviathan Cave, bristlecone pine, need to protect the undeveloped alluvial fans and valley portions of the unit which are essential to its scenic and ecological integrity, archaeological values, and the area's manageability. Mineral potential in the north of the unit was the reason given for favoring a reduced wilderness proposal. The Governor of Nevada as well as the Divisions of State Lands, Parks, Forestry, the Department of Wildlife, and Historic Preservation and Archeology, supported wilderness. The Lincoln County Conservation District supported wilderness "due to the unique topography, land forms and Indian culture, as long as the rights of existing mineral location is not curtailed." One letter was received on the final wilderness recommendation from the Environmental Protection Agency which supported the BLM's wilderness proposal.

*THE END*

Compiled from AutoCad, MapInfo and WordPerfect files supplied by the Nevada Mining Association.

By: G.I.S. Land Services 775-746-8803 revised 10-22-03

# Wilderness Study Areas

## LINCOLN COUNTY

	WSA	Total Acreage	BLM	NvMA
1	Clover Mountain	84,935	84,875	39,128
2	Delamar Mountains	126,257	0	0
3	Evergreen A	2,194	0	0
4	Evergreen B	289	0	0
5	Evergreen C	211	0	0
6	Far South Egans	53,224	42,224	0
7	Fortification Range	41,615	0	0
8	Meadow Valley Mountains	185,744	97,180	80,100
9	Morman Mountains	162,887	123,130	0
10	Parsnip Peak	88,175	53,560	27,866
11	South Pahroc	28,600	28,395	23,450
12	Table Mountain	3,558	0	0
13	Tunnel Spring	5,400	2,180	2,180
14	Weepah Springs	61,137	50,499	27,900
15	White Rock Range	24,065	20,245	0
16	Worthington Mountains	47,633	26,587	20,388
	TOTALS	915,924	528,875	221,012

# Nevada Mining Association

- Wants to be involved in the process
- Does not oppose wilderness designation of truly special BLM lands in Lincoln County that:
  - Meet the definition found in the Wilderness Act of 1964
  - Have been recommended by BLM for designation
  - Have low mineral potential



# Nevada Mining Association

- Supports legislation that addresses the status of existing Wilderness Study Areas.
- Reserves its position on new non-BLM sponsored Wilderness candidate areas in Nevada until the status of existing WSA's is resolved.