

At the same time, several resource conservation areas, State Parks, a National Park and a National Preserve have been created as well as ACECs, and wilderness areas. Additionally, new wilderness areas are currently proposed for creation in the California Wild Heritage Act of 2003. Depending upon the alternative chosen, mitigation for the proposed project could result in the purchase of private land in the vicinity of the ROI that would then be placed under federal management primarily for the conservation of sensitive species pursuant to the West Mojave Plan management prescriptions. The implementation of the West Mojave Plan also affects land use, as it will create several new ACECs and DWMA's and will restrict, or place conditions on, development and commercial activities such as mining and housing sub-divisions.

Due to the proposed purchase of land for mitigation to offset the impacts of the proposed project and the past Wildlands land purchases from Cattelus Corporation, land will have been taken out private ownership and transferred to the federal government. This, cumulatively, impacts the ability of persons to acquire land proposed to be purchased for private development. It is anticipated that future land transfers will occur from private to federal ownership, as the requirement to mitigate for impacts to endangered species will be a continuing obligation for those who wish to develop in the ROI.

Significant cumulative impacts may also occur to visual resources as more land is developed and disturbed throughout the ROI, the minor land form alternations and loss of vegetation, may cumulatively when combined with all past present and future actions result in significant loss of visibility and loss of natural vistas. The ROI has experienced significant alteration from its natural state and the proposed project is likely to add to this impact.

## **4.10 Recreation**

The proposed acquisition of additional lands by Fort Irwin has variable impacts on recreational uses relative to each alternative. This section addresses each recreational use, how it may be adversely affected by each alternative, and what the associated environmental consequences may be. Mitigation measures required to avoid or minimize the impacts are included as recommendations.

### **4.10.1 Significance Criteria**

Impacts to Recreation could be considered significant if the project significantly reduces the number of visitors currently using the area for camping, OHV use, rock hounding, fossil hunting, horseback riding, hunting, land sailing, or scenic viewing or bird watching.

### **4.10.2 Alternative I: East/West**

#### **4.10.2.1 Impacts**

#### **Recreation Areas**

##### *Recreation Areas in Study Area—Rainbow/Superior*

The northeastern most part of Rainbow/Superior comprises approximately 4,090 out of 171,000 acres and falls within the study area. Access to this area will be restricted. The loss of use of this area is not a significant impact due to the low number of visitors.

### *Other Recreation Areas*

Dumont Dunes, Stoddard/Johnson, Rasor, El Mirage, and Afton Canyon are recreational areas outside the study area. There will be no significant impacts to these areas.

### **Dispersed Recreational Activities**

#### *Sightseeing and Camping*

Alternative I will further restrict public use of approximately 103,740 acres of land for sightseeing and camping. The number of visitors camping and sightseeing in the study area is unknown. Visitors will probably be displaced with the selection of this alternative. Because most users of these public lands will continue to desire camping or sightseeing, it is likely that some use will shift to the other recreational areas. Because of the low number of visitors, this impact is not considered significant.

#### *Dispersed OHV Use*

Alternative I includes unimproved roads in the Superior Valley and East Gate area currently used by off road vehicles. Alternative I will restrict public use of these areas. Limitations to the dispersed OHV use area will not result in significant impacts due to current low usage.

#### *Rock Hounding*

Access to deposits in the Superior Valley, South Avawatz, and the southern portion of the Avawatz Mountains will be restricted by military training activities. This will not result in a significant impact due to current low usage.

#### *Fossil Hunting*

Access to areas in Superior Valley and the Avawatz Mountains within the study area will be restricted. Although there is a potential for fossils to exist in that area, as there are no known deposits the restriction will be less than significant.

#### *Horseback Riding*

Alternative I will restrict access to the Superior Valley. Because many areas are available for horseback riding in the vicinity of Barstow, the loss of opportunity for horseback riding is not considered a significant impact.

#### *Hunting and Shooting*

Hunting and shooting events is currently unauthorized within Alternative I pursuant to the Fort Irwin Management Plan. Therefore, there is not a significant impact.

#### *Land Sailing*

This alternative includes Superior Dry Lake, which is an area occasionally used by the land sailing community. Access to Superior Dry Lake will be incorporated into the expansion area to be managed for military use. Existing access via the Copper City Mine Road will be eliminated during this period and subject to military vehicle traffic. The loss of the lake surface is not a significant impact due to low current usage.

#### *Observation Activities*

In this alternative, the portion of Copper City Road passing through the withdrawn lands will be rerouted a short distance to the west of its current location.

#### **4.10.2.2 Mitigation**

The NTC and Fort Irwin plan to make Superior Dry Lake available on a prescheduled basis, providing that the event does not interfere with Fort Irwin training rotations. To ensure safety, the Army plans to define clearly the boundaries of Fort Irwin with signage, berms, and fences, as needed.

### **4.10.3 Alternative II: East Gate/South**

#### **4.10.3.1 Impacts**

##### **Recreation Areas**

###### *Recreation Areas in Study Area—Rainbow/Superior*

Alternative II does not encompass any part of the Rainbow/Superior Special Recreation Area. There is no impact.

###### *Other Recreation Areas*

There are no significant impacts to adjacent recreational areas outside the study area, which include: Dumont Dunes, Stoddard/Johnson, Rasor, El Mirage, and Afton Canyon.

##### **Dispersed Recreational Activities**

*The impacts to recreational activities are the same as in Alternative I.*

#### **4.10.3.2 Mitigation**

To ensure safety, the Army plans to define clearly the boundaries of Fort Irwin with signage, berms, and fences as needed.

### **4.10.4 Alternative III: East Gate**

#### **4.10.4.1 Impacts**

##### **Recreation Areas**

###### *Recreation Areas in Study Area—Rainbow/Superior*

Alternative III does not encompass any part of the Rainbow/Superior Special Recreation Area. There is no impact.

###### *Other Recreation Areas*

There are no significant impacts to adjacent recreational areas outside the study area, which include: Dumont Dunes, Stoddard/Johnson, Rasor, El Mirage, and Afton Canyon.

##### **Dispersed Recreational Activities**

*The impacts to recreational activities are the same as in Alternative I.*

#### **4.10.4.2 Mitigation**

To ensure safety, the Army plans to define clearly the boundaries of Fort Irwin with signage, berms, and fences, as needed. This will provide for the continued safe use of the power corridor by off-roaders.

#### **4.10.5 Alternative IV: Southwest/East Gate/UTM 90**

##### **4.10.5.1 Impacts**

###### **Recreation Areas**

###### *Recreation Areas in Study Area—Rainbow/Superior*

The northeastern most part of Rainbow/Superior comprises approximately 4,090 out of 171,000 acres and falls within the study area. Access to this area will be restricted. The loss of use of this area is not a significant impact due to the low number of visitors.

###### *Other Recreation Areas*

There are no significant impacts to adjacent recreational areas outside the study area, which include: Dumont Dunes, Stoddard/Johnson, Rasor, El Mirage, and Afton Canyon.

###### **Dispersed Recreational Activities**

*The impacts to recreational activities are the same as in Alternative I.*

##### **4.10.5.2 Mitigation**

The NTC and Fort Irwin plan to make Superior Dry Lake available on a prescheduled basis providing that the event does not interfere with Fort Irwin training rotations. As a measure to ensure safety, the Army plans to define clearly the boundaries of Fort Irwin with signage, berms, and fences as needed.

#### **4.10.6 Alternative V: East Gate/UTM 90**

##### **4.10.6.1 Impacts**

###### **Recreation Areas**

###### *Recreation Areas in Study Area—Rainbow/Superior*

Alternative V does not encompass any part of the Rainbow/Superior Special Recreation Area. There is no impact.

###### *Other Recreation Areas*

There are no significant impacts to adjacent recreational areas outside the study area, which include: Dumont Dunes, Stoddard/Johnson, Rasor, El Mirage, and Afton Canyon.

###### **Dispersed Recreational Activities**

*The impacts to recreational activities are the same as in Alternative I.*

#### **4.10.6.2 Mitigation**

To ensure safety, the Army plans to define clearly the boundaries of Fort Irwin with signage and berms.

#### **4.10.7 Alternative VI: No Action**

##### **Recreation Areas**

###### *Recreation Areas in Study Area—Rainbow/Superior*

Alternative VI does not encompass any part of the Rainbow/Superior Special Recreation Area. There is no impact.

###### *Other Recreation Areas*

There will be no change in management of the SMRAs. There are no significant impacts.

##### **Dispersed Recreational Activities**

###### *Sightseeing and Camping*

There will not be a change in opportunity for the public to participate in this activity. There are no significant impacts.

###### *Dispersed Off-Highway Vehicle Use*

There will not be a change in opportunity for the public to participate in this activity. There are no significant impacts.

###### *Rock Hounding*

There will not be a change in opportunity for the public to participate in this activity. There are no significant impacts.

###### *Fossil Hunting*

There will not be a change in opportunity for the public to participate in this activity. There are no significant impacts.

###### *Horseback Riding*

There will not be a change in opportunity for the public to participate in this activity. There are no significant impacts.

###### *Hunting and Shooting*

There will not be a change in opportunity for the public to participate in this activity. There are no significant impacts.

###### *Land Sailing*

There will not be a change in opportunity for the public to participate in this activity. There are no significant impacts.

### *Observation Activities*

There will not be a change in opportunity for the public to participate in this activity. There are no significant impacts.

#### **4.10.8 Cumulative Impacts**

Restricted access to the desert areas for all forms of recreation has been an ongoing trend over the past 30 to 40 years. With the implementation of the CDCA and designation of special resource management areas, the amount of land available for unrestricted recreational activities has diminished. The implementation of the West Mojave Plan will also further restrict recreational activities even within the ROI. The settlement in the CBD v. BLM lawsuit has already restricted use of many traditional recreation areas in the ROI and surrounding the ROI. All alternatives will add to this impact as public lands are removed from access due to military land withdrawals. Even though the study area is lightly used in comparison with other locations in the ROI, the loss of any publicly accessible lands for recreation purposes may be a cumulatively significant impact over the ROI.

#### **4.11 Mining**

Impacts on mineral exploration and development associated with each alternative are discussed in this section. Public lands contained in Alternative I have been segregated from mineral entry under the Fort Irwin Military Lands Withdrawal Act of 2001. With the exception of Alternative VI (No Action), all of the alternatives under consideration would require the Army to withdraw all public domain lands in the respective alternative from the operation of the mining and mineral leasing laws. Such action would prevent filing of new unpatented mining claims within the lands withdrawn. All mining claims, leases, and permits existing within the selected alternative would be verified as to the validity of any preexisting rights.

Impacts to Mining could be considered significant if any of the following occurred:

- ❖ result in an irrevocable loss of established or potential mineral resources; and/or
- ❖ significantly reduce mineral resources available to the marketplace.

##### **4.11.1 Alternative I: East/West**

###### **4.11.1.1 Impacts**

Public land within Alternative I has been withdrawn from mineral entry. Filing of new claims in this alternative is prohibited.

Delineated areas of high and moderate potential for mineral deposit accumulation are located within this alternative. Mineral resources that have areas of high potential in this alternative include gold, silver, iron, tungsten, and crushed rock. Gold and copper are mineral resources that have areas of moderate potential in this alternative. Alternative I contains two un-patented mining claims, seven patented claims, and one currently operating mine, the Silver Lake Mine. Closing Silver Lake Mine would cause the loss of up to 10 mining jobs. Access to mineral resources and mining claims in this alternative may no longer be available. Neither impact is significant as the amount of loss is diminimous.