

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 Such action would prevent filing of new unpatented mining claims within the lands withdrawn.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Public land within Alternative I has been withdrawn from mineral entry.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.

4.11.1.2 Mitigation

No mitigation is proposed. However, the Army may consider the continued access and operation of patented claims or mines on a regulated basis if it is compatible with training on a case-by-case basis. The Army will pay just compensation for any valid existing rights mining rights within this alternative to which access will no longer be available.

4.11.2 Alternative II: East Gate/South

The impacts to and mitigation for mining under Alternative II are the same as in Alternative I.

4.11.3 Alternative III: East Gate

The impacts to and mitigation for mining under Alternative III are the same as in Alternative I.

4.11.4 Alternative IV: Southwest/East Gate/UTM 90

The impacts to and mitigation for mining under Alternative IV are the same as in Alternative I.

4.11.5 Alternative V: East Gate/UTM 90

The impacts to and mitigation for mining under Alternative V are the same as in Alternative I.

4.11.6 Alternative VI: No Action

Under Alternative VI, the BLM would continue to manage public domain land. The BLM would probably continue to manage the land with current management prescriptions and allow it to remain open for mineral entry subject to restrictions and provisions of applicable mining regulations and land use plans. Under Alternative VI, the lands in Alternative I would remain segregated from mineral entry under the Fort Irwin Military Lands Withdrawal Act of 2001 unless returned to the jurisdiction of BLM by another congressional act.

4.11.7 Cumulative Impacts

Several factors have restricted mining in the past and may further restrict mining in the ROI in the future. If the West Mojave Plan is implemented it includes provisions for restricting new mining permits within proposed DWMA's. Mining on BLM managed land also involves permission from the USFWS. The BLM cannot issue a permit if the proposed project does not receive a "no-jeopardy" opinion for impacts to endangered species or their designated critical habitats. These actions have or may result in the denial of mining permits within the ROI. The loss of access to the Silver Lake Mine and loss of jobs in addition to loss of access to mineral resources within each alternative when combined with past, present and future mining restrictions within the ROI is cumulatively significant.

4.12 Utilities

This section analyzes potential impacts to existing utilities that may result from implementation of each alternative. Proposed mitigation measures to offset significant adverse impacts are outlined. Any impacts that result in the loss of accessibility for an operator to perform maintenance and emergency repairs, damage to facilities or equipment, or a disruption of service are considered