



Forest Service  
Pacific Southwest Region



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# **Draft Results of the Wilderness Evaluation for Public Feedback on Revision of the Inyo, Sequoia, and Sierra National Forests Land Management Plans**

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## Introduction

The 2012 Planning Rule requires the U.S. Forest Service to identify and evaluate lands that may be suitable for inclusion in the National Wilderness Preservation System and determine whether to recommend any such lands for wilderness designation. The Forest Service does not designate wilderness, only Congress can make this final determination.

There are four primary steps in the process: inventory, evaluation, analysis, and decision. In August 2014, we completed our inventory of areas that may be suitable for wilderness designation. In May 2015, we released an update on our evaluation progress, and shared 10 “polygons” (areas identified on a forest map during the inventory step of the wilderness process) we are considering for further analysis and potential wilderness recommendation. Those 10 polygons were a subset of the final wilderness inventory. In September 2015, we shared our process for evaluating and identifying potential areas for wilderness recommendation.

Below are our evaluation narratives for the entire set of polygons that appear in our final wilderness inventory. Each evaluation consists of a general description of the area, a discussion of the area’s wilderness characteristics, and the manageability of the area (consideration of existing management activities and potential future management needs that may conflict with preserving the area’s wilderness characteristics). Each evaluation also corresponds to one of the forest maps found at the end of this document.

## Current Situation

We are asking the public to review and provide feedback on these draft wilderness evaluations prior to our completing the selection of areas to be included in the analysis for the draft environmental impact statement (EIS). We will consider the public’s feedback we receive now as public participation during the evaluation step of the wilderness process. The responsible official may then decide to include additional areas in the environmental analysis we will complete for areas that may be potentially recommended for wilderness. If the responsible official decides to add additional polygons as potential recommended wilderness, those areas will be added to the 10 polygons we shared in May 2015 for analysis as areas for potential wilderness recommendation. This entire subset and our analysis of their wilderness characteristics will appear as an appendix in the draft EIS being completed as part of plan revisions for the Inyo, Sequoia, and Sierra National Forests.

If areas are recommended for wilderness, the responsible official for each forest will include forest plan direction to protect ecological and social characteristics so that the wilderness character of the recommended area(s) is not reduced before congressional action regarding the recommendation can take place.

# Results of the Evaluation

## Inyo National Forest

### Polygon 944 (Watterson Canyon)

#### General Description

Polygon 944 (Watterson Canyon) consists of 7,629 acres ranging in elevation from 7,000-7,600 feet located east of Crowley Lake and north of the Benton Crossing Road and Watterson Canyon. The polygon is elongated (horizontal) and bisected by motorized trail. It includes Watterson Inventoried Roadless Area and a sage grouse priority habitat. The ecosystem types include sagebrush, pinyon-juniper and Jeffrey pine. It is within the Benton-Casa Diablo area which is described as broad volcanic tableland punctuated by mountain peaks of the Benton mountain range. The polygon includes broad, open sandy canyons with minimal vegetation cover and shrublands and pinyon woodlands ecosystem type.

National Vegetation Classification System data indicates 61 percent of the area of the polygon (4,635 acres) consists of ecological groups that have less than 10 percent of their national extent protected in the National Wilderness Preservation System. The most prevalent groups are Inter-Mountain Basin Big Sagebrush Shrubland and Inter-Mountain Basin Montane Sagebrush Steppe. An additional 2,970 acres consists of Great Basin Pinyon-Juniper Woodland, which has less than 15 percent of its total national extent protected in the National Wilderness Preservation System.

#### Wilderness Characteristics

##### *Degree the Area Generally Appears to be Affected Primarily by the Forces of Nature*

Overall, the area is believed to have low to moderate ecological integrity. There is a departure from natural conditions due to the presence of invasive plant species (cheatgrass is expanding). Extensive past and current grazing has occurred in the area. The area is currently grazed by sheep. There are no perennial or intermittent stream channels present. There are no meadows. Riparian vegetation may be present in canyons. Soils are likely in desired condition, except for site-specific localized effects. Trampling from grazing was noted within the drainages. Air quality is excellent. The area is largely unsurveyed for cultural resources, but there are documented cultural sites.

##### *Opportunities for Solitude or Primitive and Unconfined Recreation*

The topography is highly variable, but generally includes broad, open sandy canyons with minimal vegetation cover, which provides little screening. A motorized trail bisects the area, and the Benton Crossing Road (paved road which receives moderate use) is located along the southern and eastern boundary. There is a power line along the northern boundary that may be visible from the area. The potential for encounters with other users is low and mostly concentrated on the motorized trail and roads around perimeter. There is limited opportunity for solitude due to the proximity of the road and motorized trail system. The area is largely undeveloped and there is likely opportunity for primitive-type recreation activities, such as cross-country hiking and general forest exploration.

##### *Other Features of Value*

This is a sage grouse priority habitat.

## Manageability

There is one motorized trail that runs north to south, splitting the polygon nearly in half. The area is surrounded by roads, including Benton Crossing Road (a moderately traveled, high speed paved road on the south and east), lightly traveled dirt roads (including a power line on the north), and a motorized trail through the center. The polygon occurs within priority habitat for sage grouse which may require active management, including habitat restoration activities.

## Summary of Potential Suitability for Inclusion in the National Wilderness Preservation System

There were no developments identified that would affect the undeveloped quality. This polygon presents a moderate opportunity to protect ecological groups that may be minimally represented in the National Wilderness Preservation System. Ecological groups with less than 10 percent of their national extent in the National Wilderness Preservation System comprise 4,635 acres. An ecological group with less than 15 percent of its national extent in the National Wilderness Preservation System comprises an additional 2,790 acres. The natural quality is degraded by the presence of invasive plant species (cheatgrass is expanding), as well as localized trampling impacts from grazing activities. The opportunity for solitude is degraded due to the motorized trail system that runs through the middle of the area, as well as the proximity to Benton Crossing Road. There is likely opportunity for primitive and unconfined recreation. The proximity to roads and motorized trails would make it difficult to manage for wilderness characteristics. The location of the roads, motorized trails, power lines and forest boundary do not allow the polygon to be reshaped in a way that would make it more manageable. The area occurs within priority habitat for sage grouse, where habitat restoration activities may be desired. (For map see Exhibit A – Inyo National Forest Evaluation Maps – Evaluation Map D.)

## Polygon 995 (Kelty Canyon)

### General Description

Polygon 995 consists of 5,806 acres ranging in elevation from 6,800 to 8,800 feet. It is located in the Glass Mountains, Kelty Canyon area west of Benton Crossing Road. The polygon is narrow and elongated (vertical) and the majority of the area intersects Glass Mountain Inventoried Roadless Area. Ecosystem types include mountain mahogany and pinyon-juniper. Roads (including Benton Crossing Road) and the forest boundary (private land in Frazier Canyon and Bureau of Land Management) surround the area. It is within the Benton-Casa Diablo area, which is described as broad volcanic tableland punctuated by mountain peaks of the Benton mountain range. The polygon includes broad, open sandy canyons with minimal vegetation cover and shrublands and pinyon woodlands ecosystem type.

National Vegetation Classification System data indicates 35 percent of the polygon (2,056 acres) consists of ecological groups that have less than 10 percent of their national extent protected in the National Wilderness Preservation System. The most prevalent group is Inter-Mountain Basin Montane Sagebrush Steppe. An additional 3,639 acres consists of Great Basin Pinyon-Juniper Woodland, which has less than 15 percent of its national extent protected in the National Wilderness Preservation System.

## Wilderness Characteristics

### *Degree the Area Generally Appears to be Affected Primarily by the Forces of Nature*

Overall, the area is believed to have moderate to high ecological integrity. There are few invasive plant species. The area does provide contiguous habitat for wildlife. The condition of meadow and riparian areas is unknown. Grazing occurs in the area and is evident. It is likely there are localized legacy grazing impacts. Overall, there have been limited management activities in this area. The condition of meadow and riparian areas is unknown. A mapped meadow is present in Kelty Canyon in unknown condition and riparian vegetation is present in canyons throughout this area in unknown condition. Air quality is excellent. Pinyon pine expansion is occurring, which could indicate a departure from natural fire regime due to fire suppression.

### *Opportunities for Solitude or Primitive and Unconfined Recreation*

The topography is highly variable, but generally includes moderate, open slopes and broad canyons. Topography and vegetation provide screening and the distance from impacts and developments is 1 to 3 miles from lightly used road systems, Benton Crossing Road (moderately used paved road along the southeast boundary), and Highway 120 (2 miles to the northeast). There are limited opportunities for solitude due to the proximity to a paved road and Forest system roads that surround most of the polygon; sights and sounds from the roads would likely penetrate throughout the polygon. Manageability for preservation of wilderness characteristics is diminished because the polygon is narrow and irregularly shaped, with several cherry stems containing Forest system roads. There are several roads that penetrate the perimeter of the polygon. The area is largely undeveloped and there are likely opportunities for primitive-type recreation activities such as cross-country hiking and general forest exploration.

### *Other Features of Value*

None were noted.

## Manageability

The polygon is irregularly shaped, with a few cherry-stem roads that protrude into the polygon. The polygon is elongated and narrow (north to south), no more than 3 miles across (bounded by forest roads, Benton Crossing Road, and the straight-line forest boundary).

## Summary of Potential Suitability for Inclusion in the National Wilderness Preservation System

Grazing occurred in the area in the past. There were no developments noted. Overall the area has moderate to high ecological integrity. This polygon presents a moderate opportunity to protect ecological groups that may be minimally represented in the National Wilderness Preservation System. Ecological groups with less than 10 percent of their national extent in the National Wilderness Preservation System comprise 2,056 acres. An ecological group with less than 15 percent of its national extent in the National Wilderness Preservation System comprises an additional 3,635 acres. The area does provide contiguous habitat for wildlife. Air quality is excellent. The opportunity for solitude is limited due to the proximity to roads. There are opportunities for primitive and unconfined recreation. The polygon is irregularly shaped, narrow and elongated. There is not the potential to reshape the polygon. (For map see Exhibit A – Inyo National Forest Evaluation Maps – Evaluation Map B.)

## **Polygon 1012 (Glass Mountains)**

### **General Description**

Polygon 1012 (Glass Mountains) consists of 40,363 acres ranging in elevation from 7,000 to over 11,000 feet and is located in the Glass Mountains. This area includes Glass Mountain at 11,123 feet in elevation. This large polygon is oddly shaped (elongated and narrow on west side and roads and motorized trails protrude into the polygon throughout). The polygon is bisected by motorized trails that run north to south on the east side. It intersects with Glass Mountain Inventoried Roadless Area; Indiana Summit Research Natural Area and Sentinel Meadow Research Natural Area; and priority sage grouse habitat. The polygon includes moderate to steep open slopes and ridges, cresting at Glass Mountain on the eastern side. There are gentler slopes in Jeffrey pine forest on the western side. The majority of Glass Mountain area is mid-elevation forests (Jeffrey pine and mixed-conifer forests) with some high forests (subalpine, such as whitebark pine) along the southern end and pinyon woodlands in the foothills.. Numerous perennial channels are present (O'Harrell Creek, Wilfred Creek, McGee Canyon), as well as numerous intermittent channels.

National Vegetation Classification System data indicates thirty-2 percent of the polygon (13,003 acres) consists of ecological groups that have less than 10 percent of their national extent protected in the National Wilderness Preservation System. Two of the groups, Inter-Mountain Basin big sagebrush shrubland and Inter-Mountain Basin montane sagebrush steppe, have substantial acreage in this polygon. An additional 17,288 acres are comprised of Great Basin pinyon-juniper woodland and rocky mountain aspen forest and woodland, which have less than 15 percent of their national extent protected in the National Wilderness Preservation System.

### **Wilderness Characteristics**

#### *Degree the Area Generally Appears to be Affected Primarily by the Forces of Nature*

The polygon includes sage grouse habitat restoration, including priority habitat. Both sheep and cattle grazing takes place in this area. The adjacent Owens River is stocked, and rainbow and brown trout have the opportunity to travel to connected streams within this area. This has displaced native fish species such as tui-chub, dace and pupfish. There have been some watershed restoration activities, including head cut stabilization within several meadow and spring systems including McGee Meadow and Sawmill Meadow. The area is also includes aspen restoration.

There is a communication site at the top of Glass Mountain that is accessed via helicopter. There are fences, spring boxes and troughs in this area associated with grazing allotments and there may be a water diversion to Alpers/Arcularias Ranch within the area. McGee Meadow and Sawmill Meadow have headcut structures that are not substantially visible. Headcut and fencing treatments exist around springs in the southwest part of the polygon. The fencing is noticeable. A very large number of prehistoric sites are documented, including lithic scatters, lithic isolate and piagi collection trenches. Piagi trenches may be maintained by contemporary Indians. Public comments indicate there are trails used by mountain bikers in the area. It is not certain, however, if the trails are located within the polygon boundaries.

Overall, the area is believed to have moderate ecological integrity. There is a departure from natural conditions due to the presence of invasive plant species (cheatgrass is increasing). Exotic fish species have displaced the small minnow species in area streams and ponds. Native fish and fishless areas were stocked with nonnative trout species, which has affected aquatic ecologic integrity. There have been legacy impacts to soils and riparian areas from grazing, logging, and

dispersed camping; however, these impacts are mostly site-specific and not widespread. The condition of riparian vegetation is unknown. Air quality is excellent. Several public comments indicated the area is an important wildlife migration corridor.

#### *Opportunities for Solitude or Primitive and Unconfined Recreation*

There is some screening due to topography and vegetation. The terrain is variable with some very steep slopes, as well as moderate to steep open slopes and ridges, cresting at Glass Mountain on the eastern side. Gentler slopes are found in Jeffrey pine forest on the western side. The area is surrounded by an extensive road and motorized trail system that is popular for dispersed recreation.

Several management activities have occurred or are occurring, including historic logging, multiple grazing allotments, woodcutting, outfitting and guiding, dispersed camping and hunting. The distances from impacts vary greatly, but generally are up to 3 miles from nearest road or trail system from the interior of the polygon. The eastern portion of the polygon has motorized trails that run north to south, and limits the opportunity for solitude in this area. There are areas within the polygon that are quiet places free from motorized noise. The area receives low to moderate amounts of recreation use. There are low amounts of recreation use in winter, including over snow vehicle use on the east side. There are opportunities for primitive and unconfined recreation. The interior portion of the polygon is largely undeveloped and likely provides primitive-type recreation opportunities including cross-country hiking, hunting and general forest exploration that provides some degree of challenge due to remoteness and steep terrain.

#### *Other Features of Value*

The polygon includes sensitive plant species including Mono Lake lupine, Raven's milkvetch, and Mono milkvetch. Unique, diverse conifer communities occur here (mixed pine, including whitebark, limber and lodgepole pine). Blister rust resistant white bark pine is found in the highest elevation core of the Glass Mountains. There is exceptional geology, including obsidian and pumice. The area is a sage grouse priority habitat and contains northern goshawk breeding areas. There are Lahontan cutthroat trout in O'Harrel Creek. Prehistoric use here was significant and this polygon includes a very large number of documented prehistoric sites, including lithic scatters, lithic isolates and piagi collection trenches. The Glass Mountains were an important obsidian source. The area includes views to Crowley Basin and the Sierra Nevada.

#### **Manageability**

The area is surrounded by a road and trail system that provides access for management activities and is popular for dispersed recreation. In some areas, the polygon is irregularly shaped, particularly the western portion of the polygon, in the vicinity of Indiana Summit Research Natural Area and Bald Mountain Springs, west of McGlaughlin Creek (elongated and narrow). The eastern portion of the polygon has motorized trails that would conflict with managing for wilderness character. There is also one motorized trail in the southwest portion of the polygon. There is priority sage grouse habitat that has active restoration. O'Harrel Creek contains threatened Lahontan cutthroat trout, which may require use of chemicals and mechanical equipment to maintain the populations. Because they are not the native species adapted to this ecosystem, continuous manipulations may be necessary to maintain the population, including barriers, chemical treatments and stream structures. Both sage grouse and Lahontan cutthroat trout may require active management under the Endangered Species Act. There are three water rights in the area. There is outfitting and guiding under special use authorizations occurring in the area. There is one private land inholding (40 acres west of Wilfred Canyon). The communication

site on top of Glass Mountain is a highly developed, permanent facility that is accessed by helicopter.

### Summary of Potential Suitability for Inclusion in the National Wilderness Preservation System

Activities associated with managing sage grouse, as well as meadow and aspen enhancement, occur in this area. These restoration efforts are designed to restore habitats and ecological systems. Grazing activities and past management activities such as historic logging are also evident. There are some developments within the area, which degrade the undeveloped quality. These include the communication site on top of Glass Mountain (accessed via helicopter), which is visible from much of the area. The other developments are localized and their impact to the undeveloped quality may be negligible. Overall, the area has moderate ecological integrity. This polygon presents an opportunity to protect ecological groups that may be minimally represented in the National Wilderness Preservation System. Ecological groups with less than 10 percent of their national extent in the National Wilderness Preservation System comprise 13,003 acres. Ecological groups with less than 15 percent of their national extent in the National Wilderness Preservation System comprise an additional 17,288 acres. The natural quality is degraded by the presence of invasive plant species and fish stocking has also altered native aquatic assemblages. The area does provide contiguous habitat for wildlife. Impacts to soils and riparian areas are localized and not widespread. Air quality is excellent. There are opportunities for solitude within the interior portion of the polygon, as the exterior portion of the polygon is surrounded by a road and motorized trail system that provides access and is popular for dispersed recreation and other management activities. There are opportunities for primitive and unconfined recreation.

The polygon is surrounded by an extensive road and motorized trail system. This combined with some of the existing uses along the exterior portion of the polygon would make management of this area as wilderness difficult. The western portion of the polygon is irregularly shaped and elongated and the eastern portion contains motorized trails. There is the potential to reshape the polygon to make the area more manageable (east of McLaughlin Creek and west of Wilfred Creek). During the development of the forest's assessment report in 2013, the public suggested four ecologically unique complexes that contain ecological, recreational, and cultural values to consider for special designation (not specifically wilderness), which included the Glass Mountains. (For map see Exhibit A – Inyo National Forest Evaluation Maps – Evaluation Map B and Evaluation Map D.)

### **Polygon 1039 (Black Mountain and Sawmill Canyon)**

#### General Description

Polygon 1039 (Black Mountain and Sawmill Canyon) consists of 11,026 acres ranging in elevation from 7,000 to 8,900 feet. It is located on the east side of the Glass Mountain and includes Sawmill Canyon and Black Mountain at 8,895 feet in elevation. Roads and a private land parcel protrude into the polygon, making it oddly shaped. The area is bounded by forest boundary with Bureau of Land Management and a private land parcel on the north and east side. The polygon intersects with Glass Mountain Inventoried Roadless Area. Ecosystem types include Jeffrey pine, mountain mahogany, pinyon-juniper, and sagebrush. The polygon includes moderate, open slopes and broad canyons leading to 8,895 foot Black Mountain. There are several perennial stream channels (Sawmill Canyon, Wet Fork and Dry Fork). Klondike Canyon is a major intermittent stream in this area.

National Vegetation Classification System data indicates 20 percent of the polygon (2,240 acres) consists of ecological groups that have less than 10 percent of their national extent protected in the National Wilderness Preservation System. The most prevalent group is Inter-Mountain Basin montane sagebrush steppe. An additional 1,940 acres consists of Great Basin pinyon-juniper woodland, which has less than 15 percent of its national extent protected in the National Wilderness Preservation System.

### Wilderness Characteristics

#### *Degree the Area Generally Appears to be Affected Primarily by the Forces of Nature*

There are fences, mostly in disrepair, related to an inactive grazing allotment. There are gabions on Sawmill Creek and a watershed structure on Sawmill Creek at the private land/forest boundary just outside the polygon. The lower structure is noticeable, but not substantial. The area is largely unsurveyed for cultural resources, but there are roughly a dozen known cultural resource sites including several historic structural foundations and remains as well as prehistoric lithic scatters and a pinyon camp complex of rock rings.

Overall, the area is believed to have moderate to high ecological integrity. There are few invasive plant species (Russian thistle is stable). However, exotic fish species have displaced the small minnow species in area streams and ponds. Native fish and fishless areas were stocked with nonnative trout species, which has affected aquatic ecologic integrity. The condition of meadow and riparian areas is unknown. A mapped meadow is present in Black Canyon in unknown condition and riparian vegetation is present in canyons throughout this area in unknown condition. There have been legacy impacts to soil conditions from fire, logging and grazing, however these impacts are mostly site-specific and not widespread. The impacts from fire are mostly recovered. Air quality is excellent.

#### *Opportunities for Solitude or Primitive and Unconfined Recreation*

There are opportunities for solitude. The topography is highly variable, but generally includes moderate, open slopes and broad canyons leading to 9,000 foot Black Mountain. Topography and vegetation provide screening and the distance from impacts and developments is 2 to 3 miles from lightly used road systems. From some areas, Highway 120, a state highway, would be evident. The road system around the perimeter is lightly used. The potential for encounters with other users is low and mostly concentrated on motorized trails and roads around the perimeter. There are several roads and a private land parcel that penetrate the perimeter of the polygon. The area is largely undeveloped and there are likely opportunities for primitive-type recreation activities, including cross-country hiking, hunting, photography and general forest exploration.

#### *Other Features of Value*

The polygon includes outstanding views of White Mountains and Adobe Valley.

### Manageability

The polygon is irregularly shaped, with a few cherry-stem roads and a private land parcel that protrudes into the area at several locations. The north and east boundary are the straight line forest boundary with Bureau of Land Management. There are three water rights.

## Summary of Potential Suitability for Inclusion in the National Wilderness Preservation System

Grazing occurred in the area in the past. The allotment is currently vacant. There were a few developments identified that could degrade the undeveloped quality, but it is probably negligible. Overall the area has moderate to high ecological integrity. There are opportunities for solitude in the interior, but opportunities near the perimeter are limited due to the sights and sounds of adjacent Forest system roads. Managing the polygon to preserve its wilderness characteristics would be moderately difficult: the polygon is irregularly shaped, with three cherry stems containing Forest system roads; adjacent land includes private property; and there are three water rights within the area. This polygon presents a moderate opportunity to protect ecological groups that may be minimally represented in the National Wilderness Preservation System. Ecological groups with less than 10 percent of their national extent in the National Wilderness Preservation System comprise 2,240 acres. An ecological group with less than 15 percent of its national extent in the National Wilderness Preservation System comprises an additional 8,450 acres. There are few invasive plant species (Russian thistle is stable) and historic fish stocking has altered native aquatic assemblages. The area does provide contiguous habitat for wildlife. Air quality is excellent. The potential to reshape the polygon to make it more manageable is unlikely. (For map see Exhibit A – Inyo National Forest Evaluation Maps – Evaluation Map B.)

### **Polygon 1068 (Dexter Canyon)**

#### **General Description**

Polygon 1068 (Dexter Canyon) consists of 12,311 acres with elevations ranging from 7,200 to 8,800 feet. It is located south of Highway 120 and east of Sagehen Peak and includes Dexter Canyon. A motorized trail dissects the polygon and splits it in half. The polygon is bounded by Highway 120, Bureau of Land Management, and private land in the northeastern corner. Private land parcels (Symons Ranch and Adobe Reservoir) and roads protrude into the area making the polygon oddly shaped and noncontiguous. There is a private land inholding northwest of Dexter Canyon. The polygon intersects Dexter Canyon Inventoried Roadless Area. Ecosystem types include Jeffrey pine, pinyon-juniper, and sagebrush. It is a priority habitat for sage grouse. There are numerous perennial channels such as Dexter, Wet, and North Canyons. Intermittent channels also are present.

National Vegetation Classification System data indicates 63 percent of the polygon (7,779 acres) consists of ecological groups that have less than 10 percent of their national extent protected in the National Wilderness Preservation System. The most prevalent groups are Inter-Mountain Basin big sagebrush shrubland and Inter-Mountain Basin montane sagebrush steppe. An additional 3,677 acres is largely comprised of Great Basin pinyon-juniper woodland, which has less than 15 percent of its national extent protected in the National Wilderness Preservation System.

#### **Wilderness Characteristics**

##### *Degree the Area Generally Appears to be Affected Primarily by the Forces of Nature*

Brown trout are stocked on private land downstream, and brown trout are self-sustaining. This has affected invertebrate populations and the fishless nature of the streams. There has been pinyon pine expansion in some areas, which indicates a departure from natural fire regime due to fire suppression. There have been some watershed restoration activities, including head cut stabilization within several meadow systems including Johnny and Wild Horse Meadows.

There is an active sheep grazing allotment, Dexter Creek Allotment. There are no fences, but there are at least three large water troughs and a large water tank in the area. Shepherds drive sheep from place to place and set up camps where they stay overnight. The camps include a trailer, water trucks, up to 1,500 sheep and herding and guard dogs. There are some headcut structures (rocks and logs) that are not substantially noticeable within several of the meadows. The area is largely unsurveyed for cultural resources; however, there are 10 documented properties, which include a Basque shelter, a historic dam and reservoir, and numerous prehistoric lithic scatters.

Overall, the area is believed to have moderate ecological integrity. There has been some pinyon pine expansion in some areas that indicates a departure from natural fire regime. There are few invasive plant species. However, exotic fish species have displaced the small minnow species in area streams and ponds. Native fish and fishless areas were stocked with nonnative trout species, which has affected aquatic ecologic integrity. In general, the condition of riparian vegetation is unknown. Sheep are not allowed to graze in the meadows on the Dexter Creek Allotment; however, there is evidence of sheep grazing along other parts of the riparian corridor. There have been legacy impacts to soils from logging infrastructure (skid trails) and grazing impacts especially in meadows. Air quality is excellent.

#### *Opportunities for Solitude or Primitive and Unconfined Recreation*

The area is dissected by one motorized trail. Roads and private land parcels penetrate the polygon. In addition, the area is bounded on the north by Highway 120. Proximity to motorized recreation (roads and trails), private land parcels and Highway 120, limit opportunities for solitude. There is gentle terrain with some screening from trees and within the drainages. There is an active sheep grazing allotment, Dexter Creek Allotment. Shepherds drive sheep from place to place and set up camps where they stay overnight. The camps include a trailer, water trucks, up to 1,500 sheep and herding and guard dogs. Grazing activities could also limit the opportunity for solitude. There is nothing notable that would limit the opportunity for primitive or unconfined recreation. There are opportunities for primitive-type recreation activities, including cross-country hiking, hunting, and general forest exploration. The area receives low to medium amount of use mostly focused around the roads and motorized trails.

#### *Other Features of Value*

Features of value in this polygon include the sensitive Bodie Hills rockcress. There may be rare spring snails in some of the springs in the area. It is a priority habitat for sage grouse.

#### **Manageability**

Motorized trails located in the area, as well as forest roads in the vicinity (or cherry-stemmed), would make it difficult to prevent vehicle incursions. A motorized trail crosses the polygon and splits it in half. The polygon is bounded by Highway 120, Bureau of Land Management and private land in the northeast corner. Private land parcels (Symons Ranch and Adobe Reservoir) and roads protrude into the area making the polygon oddly shaped and noncontiguous. Adobe Reservoir is partially on National Forest System land within the polygon and is under special use permit. There is a private land inholding northwest of Dexter Canyon that likely has an access road. The area contains priority habitat for sage grouse, which may require active management.

## Summary of Potential Suitability for Inclusion in the National Wilderness Preservation System

Grazing, fish stocking, fire suppression and watershed restoration activities have had some impacts to wilderness characteristics. There are some developments related to sheep grazing, however they are localized and the effects to the undeveloped quality are likely negligible. Overall, the area is believed to have moderate ecological integrity. This polygon presents a moderate opportunity to protect ecological groups that may be minimally represented in the National Wilderness Preservation System. Ecological groups with less than 10 percent of their national extent in the National Wilderness Preservation System comprise 7,779 acres. An ecological group with less than 15 percent of its national extent in the National Wilderness Preservation System comprises an additional 3,677 acres. There has been some pinyon pine expansion in some areas, which indicates a departure from natural fire regime. There are few invasive plant species. Fish stocking has altered native aquatic assemblages. There may be impacts from historic and current sheep grazing. Air quality is excellent. Proximity to motorized recreation (roads and trails), private land parcels and Highway 120, limit the opportunity for solitude. There is one motorized trail that runs north to south and nearly splits the polygon in half. There are opportunities for primitive and unconfined recreation. The polygon is irregularly shaped, with cherry-stemmed roads and private land parcels (including one inholding) that protrude into the polygon. There is not likely the opportunity to reshape the polygon to make it more manageable. (For map see Exhibit A – Inyo National Forest Evaluation Maps – Evaluation Map B.)

## Polygon 1072 (Mono Craters)

### General Description

Polygon 1072 (Mono Craters) consists of 7,574 acres ranging in elevation from 7,200 to 9,172 feet (Crater Mountain). It is located south of Mono Lake and Highway 120 and includes Mono Craters, which is the youngest mountain range in the United States. Most of the polygon is located within the Mono Basin National Forest Scenic Area. Ecosystem types include Jeffrey pine, pinyon-juniper, sagebrush, and a special type of dry forb. It is elongated (vertical) and roads protrude into the polygon along the west side, making it oddly shaped. The southern portion is bounded by private land (U.S. Pumice), leaving a small finger (East Craters Sand Flat) included in the inventory in the southeast corner. It intersects with the Mono Craters Inventoried Roadless Area and a majority of the polygon is located within the Mono Basin National Forest Scenic Area. It is priority habitat for sage grouse. The area includes Mono Craters with exposed domes and lava flows and sand flats.

National Vegetation Classification System data indicates 57 percent of the polygon (4,330 acres) consists of ecological groups that may be considered minimally represented in the National Wilderness Preservation System. The most prevalent group is Inter-Mountain Basin big sagebrush shrubland. The remainder of the polygon is largely comprised of pumice flats with its dry forb vegetation type.

### Wilderness Characteristics

#### *Degree the Area Generally Appears to be Affected Primarily by the Forces of Nature*

Grazing occurs in the area. There are two sheep allotments, but there is not much use. The polygon includes historic mining. The area also contains United States Geological Survey

monitoring equipment and there is the need to maintain and use helicopters to access the equipment.

The polygon has good ecological integrity, reflecting conditions that would normally be associated with the area absent human intervention. There are rare plants and unique vegetation types on pumice flats. There are a few invasive species, including cheatgrass. The area provides contiguous habitat for wildlife. The polygon contains limited water and there are no mapped meadows or riparian vegetation. The soils are likely at the desired condition. Air quality is excellent.

#### *Opportunities for Solitude or Primitive and Unconfined Recreation*

There is little screening in the area, with visibility toward the Mono Basin and Highways 120 and 395. There are several cherry-stem roads that protrude into the polygon along the western perimeter and Highway 120 is the northern boundary. The polygon is surrounded by an extensive road system. There is a commercial operation on the private land along the southern boundary (U.S. Pumice). There is a special use permit road for a small road segment on the south end. The proximity to the road system and commercial operation on private land limits the opportunity for solitude. The potential for encounters with other visitors is low. There may be opportunities for primitive and unconfined recreation, including cross-country hiking, photography and general forest exploration.

#### *Other Features of Value*

The Mono Craters are a unique volcanic feature.

#### **Manageability**

The polygon is irregularly shaped with cherry-stem roads that protrude into the western boundary and a narrow finger that reaches south of the private land. The polygon as a whole is narrow and elongated (less than 3 miles across). Private land to the south is owned by U.S. Pumice, which has a commercial operation. There are haul routes under special use permit. There are old unauthorized routes that are noticeable. The area contains priority habitat for sage grouse, which may require active management.

#### **Summary of Potential Suitability for Inclusion in the National Wilderness Preservation System**

Grazing allotments are present but use is low. There is evidence of historic mining activity. There are few developments noted. The United States Geological Survey has monitoring equipment in the area that is maintained by helicopter. The area has ecological integrity and reflects conditions that would normally be associated with an area absent human intervention. This polygon presents a limited opportunity to protect ecological groups that may be minimally represented in the National Wilderness Preservation System. Ecological groups with less than 10 percent of their national extent in the National Wilderness Preservation System comprise 4,330 acres. The opportunity for solitude is degraded due to the proximity to roads and highways. There may be opportunity for primitive and unconfined recreation. There is limited opportunity to reshape to polygon to make it more suitable or manageable for wilderness characteristics due to the proximity to roads and the already narrow shape of the polygon. There are general tribal concerns regarding tribal access and use. Some existing uses would be nonconforming with wilderness designation, including snowmobile use and mountain biking. (For map see Exhibit A – Inyo National Forest Evaluation Maps – Evaluation Map A.)

## **Polygon 1080 (Anderson Point)**

### **General Description**

Polygon 1080 (Anderson Point) consists of 1,137 acres with elevations ranging from 8,000 to 8,800 feet. It is contiguous to the South Sierra Wilderness and is located between Monache Meadows and the South Sierra Wilderness, west of Cow Canyon and the Pacific Crest National Scenic Trail. There is nothing notable regarding the polygon shape, except one road that protrudes into the western boundary. The polygon intersects with the South Sierra Inventoried Roadless Area. Ecosystem types include sagebrush and white fir. It includes dry meadows and rolling forested granite outcrops with gentle to moderate slopes.

National Vegetation Classification System data indicates 52 percent of the polygon (442 acres) consists of an ecological group, Inter-Mountain Basin big sagebrush shrubland, which has less than 10 percent of its national extent protected in the National Wilderness Preservation System.

### **Wilderness Characteristics**

#### *Degree the Area Generally Appears to be Affected Primarily by the Forces of Nature*

Grazing occurs in the area and there has been some watershed restoration completed. The area contains headcut and gully treatments. They are not substantial, but noticeable. There is a possible spring box near Olivas Cabin. Only 10 percent of the area has been surveyed for cultural resources, but there are known cultural resource sites including prehistoric encampments (lithic scatters).

The polygon has moderate ecological integrity, somewhat reflecting conditions that would normally be associated with the area absent human intervention. Plant species composition is unknown; however, it has likely been altered by grazing. It is unknown if invasive plant species are present; probably dandelions and there may be some cheatgrass. The area provides contiguous habitat for wildlife. It was recently burned in the Summit Fire. The area includes perennial channels associated with springs and the riparian condition is unknown.

Legacy and current grazing impact water quality in the polygon; however, there are no State-listed impaired or threatened streams. There are legacy and current impacts from grazing to soil conditions, with localized impacts. There was a fire use fire in 2003 with erosion likely at background levels. The air quality is nonattainment for ozone (Tulare County).

#### *Opportunities for Solitude or Primitive and Unconfined Recreation*

Screening is present. There is some visibility to Monache Meadow below. Occasional to frequent off highway vehicle traffic and dispersed camping occurs. Vehicles and campers along the western boundary can be seen and heard. The area is mostly free from motorized noise except along the western boundary. Olivas Cow Camp (parking area, pastures with fences) is within 200 feet of the boundary. The parking area for Deer Mountain Trail is in the vicinity. Solitude may be affected by these developments. The potential for encounters with other visitors is low to medium, except during the Monache stock drive, which happens twice each year. Current primitive recreation activities in this area include: hiking, backpacking and horseback riding on a forest system trail that accesses the South Sierra Wilderness and deer hunting in the fall. The degree of challenge is similar to the adjacent wilderness. There are also opportunities for wildlife observation, photography and enjoying nature. Access for winter cross-country skiing is challenging because this area is at least 25 miles from a plowed road.

### *Other Features of Value*

None were noted.

### Manageability

This is a small, irregularly shaped polygon adjoining the South Sierra Wilderness and bounded by the Monache off highway vehicle area along the western boundary. The cherry-stem road is regularly used by the grazing permittee and hikers.

### Summary of Potential Suitability for Inclusion in the National Wilderness Preservation System

Grazing management and watershed restoration is evident in the area. There are developments related to range improvements. The area is believed to have moderate ecological integrity. This polygon does not present an opportunity to protect ecological groups that may be minimally represented in the National Wilderness Preservation System. Ecological groups with less than 10 percent of their national extent in the National Wilderness Preservation System comprise a low number of acres. The opportunity for solitude is degraded due to the proximity to roads (Monache off highway vehicle area) and developments, primarily along the western border. There may be opportunity for primitive and unconfined recreation. There are no unique features. There is not an opportunity to reshape this small polygon to make it more suitable or manageable for wilderness character. (For map see Exhibit A – Inyo National Forest Evaluation Maps – Evaluation Map I.)

## **Polygon 1081 (Bakeoven Meadows)**

### General Description

Polygon 1081 (Bakeoven Meadows) consists of 5,413 acres ranging in elevation from 8,000 to 9,600 feet. It is located east of Kingfisher Ridge and is surrounded by the Golden Trout and the South Sierra Wildernesses along the western, northern and eastern boundaries of the polygon. There is nothing notable regarding the polygon shape, except that one road and private land parcel protrude into the southern boundary. The west, north and east boundaries are contiguous with the Golden Trout and South Sierra Wildernesses. The polygon intersects with the South Sierra Inventoried Roadless Area. The area includes a portion of the South Fork of the Kern River, part of the designated Kern Wild and Scenic River, flowing north to south through the middle of the polygon. Ecosystem types include red fir, subalpine fir, and white fir. The polygon's scenery includes granite domes and creeks.

National Vegetation Classification System data indicates 8 percent of the polygon (408 acres) consists of an ecological group, Inter-Mountain big sagebrush shrubland, which has less than 10 percent of its national extent protected in the National Wilderness Preservation System. An additional 1,000 acres consists of Great Basin pinyon-juniper woodland and Rocky Mountain aspen forest and woodland, which have less than 15 percent of their national extent protected in the National Wilderness Preservation System.

### Wilderness Characteristics

#### *Degree the Area Generally Appears to be Affected Primarily by the Forces of Nature*

There is very little impact from humans in this area. There is grazing activity. Fuel reduction activities are planned near Kingfisher Ridge. The area does contain watershed treatments.

The fish barrier on South Fork Kern cannot be removed. The area does contain watershed treatments, including small structures and rock shoots. The polygon includes livestock grazing

and range improvements. Less than a quarter of the area has been surveyed for cultural resources. Five known sites include remains of a log cabin, other historic structure remains, historic debris scatters and prehistoric lithic scatters.

The polygon has high ecological integrity, reflecting conditions that would normally be associated with the area absent human intervention. There are no known invasive plant species (stable). There is heavy fuel loading along Kingfisher Ridge. The area does not provide contiguous connectivity for habitat. Perennial stream channels include Soda Creek and South Fork Kern River and numerous springs and meadows are present. There are legacy and current grazing impacts, mostly in meadows and adjacent uplands (localized impacts). Meadows were evaluated as having fully functional and functional at risk watershed ratings; meadow vegetation was rated in excellent condition in the meadows evaluated. Riparian vegetation on perennial channels is likely in good condition. There are legacy and current grazing impacts to water quality (fecal coliform); however, there are no State-listed impaired or threatened streams. Air quality is nonattainment for ozone (Tulare County).

#### *Opportunities for Solitude or Primitive and Unconfined Recreation*

Topography and vegetation provide some screening (forested areas and creeks). There is a private inholding with residences along the southern perimeter. Several private cabins to the southeast are within 400 feet of the boundary. There are occasional vehicles and sounds associated with private cabins. One cherry-stem road provides access to dispersed camping along South Fork Kern River and extends about 4,500 ft. into the polygon. This is a popular dispersed camping area in summer and fall. Activities on private property, as well as dispersed recreation along the South Fork Kern River, may affect solitude, otherwise the area is mostly quiet. The potential for encounters with other visitors is low to medium. Current primitive recreation activities in this area include: hiking, backpacking and horseback riding on two forest system trails that access the Golden Trout Wilderness; fishing on the South Fork Kern River; and deer hunting in the fall. The degree of challenge is similar to the adjacent wilderness. This is a popular primitive recreation area during summer and fall months. There are also opportunities for wildlife observation, photography and enjoying nature, particularly along the wild and scenic South Fork Kern River. Access for winter cross-country skiing is challenging because this area is at least 25 miles from a plowed road.

#### *Other Features of Value*

The polygon contains rare and sensitive plant species: Kern milkvetch, mountain yellow violet, Tulare rockcress, and field ivesia. The South Fork Kern is designated as a wild and scenic river. Also of value are the views of Monache Mountain, a unique volcanic feature.

#### **Manageability**

The polygon is contiguous with Golden Trout Wilderness along the west, north and east perimeters. There is a private land inholding (with cabins) along the south perimeter, with road access. One cherry-stem road provides access to dispersed camping along South Fork Kern River and there is the potential for vehicle incursions off of the cherry-stem road. There is a state wildlife reserve along the boundary in the southeast corner (section 34, T20S, R35E). There is proposed fuel reduction through vegetation treatments in this area. Two water rights are present and there is a grazing allotment.

## Summary of Potential Suitability for Inclusion in the National Wilderness Preservation System

Grazing management and watershed restoration in the area impact the wilderness characteristics. There are fish barriers and range improvements which impact the undeveloped quality. The area is believed to have high ecological integrity. This polygon presents a limited opportunity to protect ecological groups that may be minimally represented in the National Wilderness Preservation System. Ecological groups with less than 10 percent of their national extent in the National Wilderness Preservation System comprise 408 acres. Ecological groups with less than 15 percent of their national extent in the National Wilderness Preservation System comprise an additional 1,000 acres. The opportunity for solitude is degraded due to the proximity to roads (Monache OHV area), dispersed recreation along the South Fork Kern River, and private inholdings which have developments, primarily along the southern border. There may be opportunity for primitive and unconfined recreation. There is no good opportunity to reshape this polygon to make it more suitable or manageable for wilderness character. (For map see Exhibit A – Inyo National Forest Evaluation Maps – Evaluation Map I.)

### **Polygon 1092 (Slide Canyon)**

#### General Description

Polygon 1092 (Slide Canyon) consists of 4,252 acres with elevations ranging from 4,400 to 10,000 feet. It is contiguous to the Golden Trout Wilderness and is located southeast of Horseshoe Meadows Road, west of Highway 395, Owens Lake and the Cottonwood Power Plant. Slide Canyon runs east through the polygon. The polygon is oddly shaped around Horseshoe Meadow Road on the north and the forest boundary on the east side. Ecosystem types include pinyon-juniper, white fir, and xeric shrublands and blackbrush. It does not intersect or overlap with any other designated areas and includes steep terrain.

National Vegetation Classification System data indicates 1 percent of the polygon (37 acres) consists of ecological groups that have less than 10 percent of their national extent protected in the National Wilderness Preservation System. An additional 1,000 acres consists of Great Basin pinyon-juniper woodland and Rocky Mountain aspen forest and woodland, which have less than 15 percent of their national extent protected in the National Wilderness Preservation System.

#### Wilderness Characteristics

##### *Degree the Area Generally Appears to be Affected Primarily by the Forces of Nature*

Overall, the area is believed to have low to moderate ecological integrity. There is a departure from natural conditions due to the presence of invasive plant species (cheatgrass is abundant). Fish stocking has also altered native aquatic assemblages. The condition of riparian vegetation associated with the perennial stream channel (Cottonwood Creek) and canyons is not known. Soils are likely meeting desired conditions. The air quality is nonattainment for pm10 (Owens Valley pm10 planning area). There are Los Angeles Department of Water and Power water diversions within this area.

##### *Opportunities for Solitude or Primitive and Unconfined Recreation*

The area is in the vicinity of roads, including Horseshoe Meadow Road (moderately use paved road that access campgrounds and trailheads). The area is within one mile of Cottonwood Power Plant and Highway 395. Owens Valley and Highway 395 are visible and can be heard from much of the area. There may be some opportunity for solitude within the canyons. There is nothing notable that would limit the opportunity for primitive or unconfined recreation.

### *Other Features of Value*

None were noted.

### **Manageability**

This is an irregularly shaped polygon that is bounded between the existing wilderness boundary and the forest boundary. There is a private land parcel that protrudes into the polygon.

### **Summary of Potential Suitability for Inclusion in the National Wilderness Preservation System**

There are Los Angeles Department of Water and Power infrastructure (water diversions) in the area that degrade the undeveloped quality. This polygon presents a limited opportunity to protect ecological groups that may be minimally represented in the National Wilderness Preservation System. Ecological groups with less than 10 percent of their national extent in the National Wilderness Preservation System comprise a low number of acres. Ecological groups with less than 15 percent of their national extent in the National Wilderness Preservation System comprise an additional 1,000 acres. The natural quality is degraded by the presence of invasive plant species (cheatgrass). Air quality is nonattainment for pm10. The opportunity for solitude is degraded due to the proximity to roads, the Cottonwood Power Plant and Highway 395. There is opportunity for primitive and unconfined recreation, although it is very limited due to the location of the polygon. There is not really an opportunity to reshape the polygon, due to its small size and irregularly shaped boundary that is drawn tightly between existing wilderness and the forest boundary. (For map see Exhibit A – Inyo National Forest Evaluation Maps – Evaluation Map H.)

## **Polygon 1098 (Escarpment from George Creek to Hogback Creek)**

### **General Description**

Polygon 1098 (Escarpment from George Creek to Hogback Creek) consists of 1,476 acres with elevations ranging from 6,000 to 8,000 feet. It is contiguous to the John Muir Wilderness and is located along the Sierra Nevada escarpment between George Creek and Hogback Creek. The polygon is located between the John Muir Wilderness on the west and Alabama Hills Special Recreation Management Area (Bureau of Land Management) on the east. The polygon intersects with the Independence Creek Inventoried Roadless Area. Ecosystem types include pinyon-juniper and sagebrush. It contains steep terrain. A motorized trail dissects the northwestern edge of the polygon and a road along the southern portion of the polygon makes it oddly shaped along the southern boundary. In addition, the eastern boundary is a straight line due to the forest boundary with Bureau of Land Management (Alabama Hills Special Recreation Management Area). National Vegetation Classification System data indicates less than 1 percent of the polygon (5 acres) consists of an ecological group that has less than 10 percent of its national extent protected in the National Wilderness Preservation System.

### **Wilderness Characteristics**

#### *Degree the Area Generally Appears to be Affected Primarily by the Forces of Nature*

Overall, the area is believed to have low to moderate ecological integrity. There is a departure from natural conditions due to the presence of invasive plant species (cheatgrass is abundant). Fish stocking has also altered native aquatic assemblages. The condition of riparian vegetation associated with the perennial stream channel (George Creek) and canyons is not known. Soils are likely meeting desired conditions. The air quality is nonattainment for pm10 (Owens Valley pm10

planning area). It is likely that past grazing occurred in the area. Los Angeles Department of Water and Power infrastructure may be in the area. No other developments were noted.

#### *Opportunities for Solitude or Primitive and Unconfined Recreation*

The area is in the vicinity of roads and a motorized trail (along the northern and southern perimeter). The Owens Valley and Highway 395 are visible from parts of the area. There is nothing notable that would limit the opportunity for primitive or unconfined recreation. The Alabama Hills Special Recreation Management Area (Bureau of Land Management) is adjacent.

#### *Other Features of Value*

None were noted.

#### **Manageability**

This is an irregularly shaped, small polygon that adjoins existing wilderness and is drawn to the forest boundary.

#### **Summary of Potential Suitability for Inclusion in the National Wilderness Preservation System**

There may be Los Angeles Department of Water and Power infrastructure in the area which could degrade the undeveloped quality. This polygon does not present an opportunity to protect ecological groups that may be minimally represented in the National Wilderness Preservation System. Ecological groups with less than 10 percent of their national extent in the National Wilderness Preservation System comprise a low number of acres. The natural quality is degraded by the presence of invasive plant species (cheatgrass). Air quality is nonattainment for pm10. The opportunity for solitude is degraded due to the proximity to roads and visibility to Highway 395. There is opportunity for primitive and unconfined recreation, although it is very limited due to the small size and location of the polygon. There is not an opportunity to reshape the polygon, as it is an oddly shaped polygon that is elongated horizontally and is drawn tightly between existing wilderness and the forest boundary. (For map see Exhibit A – Inyo National Forest Evaluation Maps – Evaluation Map H.)

### **Polygon 1099 (Escarpment – Shephard Creek)**

#### **General Description**

Polygon 1099 consists of 1,092 acres with elevations ranging from 5,800 to 9,000 feet. It is contiguous to the John Muir Wilderness and is located along the Sierra Nevada escarpment between Shephard Pass Trailhead and Bairs Creek. The polygon is located between John Muir Wilderness on the west and Bureau of Land Management land on the east. The area is an oddly shaped polygon due to the existing wilderness boundary and forest boundary. There is one road that protrudes into the polygon along the western boundary. The majority of the polygon intersects with the Independence Creek Inventoried Roadless Area. Ecosystem types include pinyon-juniper, sagebrush, and xeric shrublands and blackbrush. The area includes steep terrain.

National Vegetation Classification System data indicates less than 1 percent of the polygon (4 acres) consists of an ecological group, Great Basin foothill and lower montane riparian woodland and shrubland that has less than 10 percent of its national extent protected in the National Wilderness Preservation System.

## Wilderness Characteristics

### *Degree the Area Generally Appears to be Affected Primarily by the Forces of Nature*

It is likely that grazing occurred in the area. Overall, the area is believed to have low to moderate ecological integrity. There is a departure from natural conditions due to the presence of invasive plant species (cheatgrass is abundant). Fish stocking has also altered native aquatic assemblages. The condition of riparian vegetation associated with the perennial stream channel (Shepard Creek) and canyons is not known. Soils are likely meeting desired conditions. The air quality is nonattainment for pm10 (Owens Valley pm10 planning area).

### *Opportunities for Solitude or Primitive and Unconfined Recreation*

The area is in the vicinity of roads on Bureau of Land Management lands. There is one short cherry-stem road that protrudes into the polygon. The Owens Valley and Highway 395 are visible and can be heard from much of the area. There is nothing notable that would limit the opportunity for primitive or unconfined recreation.

### *Other Features of Value*

None were noted.

## Manageability

This area is an irregularly shaped, small polygon that adjoins existing wilderness and is drawn to the forest boundary.

## Summary of Potential Suitability for Inclusion in the National Wilderness Preservation System

There are no known developments that would degrade the undeveloped quality. This polygon does not present an opportunity to protect ecological groups that may be minimally represented in the National Wilderness Preservation System. Ecological groups with less than 10 percent of their national extent in the National Wilderness Preservation System comprise a low number of acres. The natural quality is degraded by the presence of invasive plant species (cheatgrass). Air quality is nonattainment for pm10. The opportunity for solitude is degraded due to the proximity to roads and visibility to Highway 395 (and noise from the highway). There is opportunity for primitive and unconfined recreation, although it is very limited due to the small size and location of the polygon. There is not really an opportunity to reshape the polygon, as it is an oddly shaped polygon that is elongated horizontally and is drawn tightly between existing wilderness and the forest boundary. (For map see Exhibit A – Inyo National Forest Evaluation Maps – Evaluation Map H.)

## **Polygon 1106 (Escarpment – Onion Valley South)**

### General Description

Polygon 1106 (Escarpment-Onion Valley South) consists of 1,408 acres ranging in elevation from 5,500 to 11,000 feet. It is contiguous to the John Muir Wilderness and is located along the Sierra Nevada escarpment south of Onion Valley and Independence Creek. It is an oddly shaped polygon due to: road and recreation developments in Onion Valley, along Independence Creek; existing wilderness boundary along the western edge; and roads that protrude into the boundary along the eastern edge of the polygon. Ecosystem types include sagebrush and xeric shrublands and blackbrush. The polygon intersects with the Independence Creek Inventoried Roadless Area (western portion of the polygon, adjacent to wilderness boundary). The area is characterized by

steep to precipitous rugged terrain in the canyons and moderate to gentle slopes on the alluvial fans and benches.

National Vegetation Classification System data indicates 4 percent of the polygon (52 acres) consists of ecological groups, Great Basin foothill and lower montane riparian woodland and shrubland which have less than 10 percent of their national extent protected in the National Wilderness Preservation System.

### Wilderness Characteristics

#### *Degree the Area Generally Appears to be Affected Primarily by the Forces of Nature*

Overall, the area is believed to have low to moderate ecological integrity. There is a departure from natural conditions due to the presence of invasive plant species (cheatgrass is abundant) and past vegetation alteration from historic mining activities. Fish stocking has altered native aquatic assemblages. The historic Kearsarge town site and remnants of historic mining may be located in the area. No other developments were noted. The condition of riparian vegetation associated with the perennial stream channel (Pinyon Creek) and canyons is not known. Soils are likely meeting desired conditions. The Onion Fire in 1985 likely accelerated erosion rates, but the area is mostly recovered. The air quality is nonattainment for pm10 (Owens Valley pm10 planning area).

#### *Opportunities for Solitude or Primitive and Unconfined Recreation*

The area is located in the vicinity of a concentrated recreation area (Onion Valley), which has campgrounds, trailheads, and the Seven Pines Recreation Residence Tract. In addition, Highway 395 and the private land developments in the Owens Valley are highly visible from most of the area, except within the canyons. The proximity to roads, a concentrated recreation area and improvements limits the opportunity for solitude. There is nothing notable that would limit the opportunity for primitive or unconfined recreation. Steep terrain limits access to the area. The area currently receives a low amount of use, which includes hiking Pinyon Creek, hunting, pinyon pine nut gathering and cross-country skiing.

#### *Other Features of Value*

The area includes outstanding views of the Sierra Nevada and features such as Pinyon Pine Falls. Riparian water birch (tracked by California Fish and Wildlife) is found in the polygon. Springs may contain rare spring snails.

### Manageability

The area is contiguous with an existing wilderness area (John Muir Wilderness) along the western edge of the polygon. The polygon is surrounded by roads, including one road that protrudes into the middle of the polygon. The area is adjacent to lands managed by the Inyo National Forest.

### Summary of Potential Suitability for Inclusion in the National Wilderness Preservation System

The area is mostly undeveloped, with the exception of possible remnants from historic mining activity and Kearsarge town site. This polygon does not present an opportunity to protect ecological groups that may be minimally represented in the National Wilderness Preservation System. Ecological groups with less than 10 percent of their national extent in the National Wilderness Preservation System comprise a low number of acres. The natural quality is degraded by the presence of invasive plant species (cheatgrass), as well as impacts from past mining activities (old roads and vegetation manipulation). Fish stocking has also altered native aquatic

assemblages. Air quality is nonattainment for pm10. The opportunity for solitude is degraded due to the proximity to developed recreation use, motorized road system and visibility to Highway 395 and private land development. Although steep terrain limits access to the area, there is opportunity for primitive and unconfined recreation. The proximity to roads (including one road that protrudes into the area, splitting the area nearly in half) and recreation developments would make wilderness characteristics difficult to maintain in the area. There is the potential to reshape the polygon so that the north half is excluded; however, the remaining area still has similar impacts related to the proximity to the road system. (For map see Exhibit A – Inyo National Forest Evaluation Maps – Evaluation Map G.)

## **Polygon 1108 (Escarpment – Onion Valley North)**

### **General Description**

Polygon 1108 (Escarpment-Onion Valley North) consists of 2,100 acres with elevations ranging from 5,000 to 9,500 feet. It is contiguous to the John Muir Wilderness and is located along the Sierra Nevada escarpment north of Onion Valley and Independence Creek. This is an oddly shaped polygon due to road and recreation developments in Onion Valley and a private land parcel that protrudes into the boundary along the eastern edge of the polygon. The polygon intersects with the Tinemaha Inventoried Roadless Area (majority of the polygon along the western portion of the polygon). Ecosystem types include sagebrush and xeric shrublands and blackbrush. The area is characterized by steep to precipitous rugged terrain in the canyons and moderate to gentle slopes on the alluvial fans and benches. It is within the 2007 Inyo Complex (a 30,000-acre fire) and 2008 flood and mudflow event (Oak Creek).

National Vegetation Classification System data indicates less than 1 percent of the polygon (4 acres) consists of ecological groups, Great Basin foothill and lower montane riparian woodland and shrubland which have less than 10 percent of their national extent protected in the National Wilderness Preservation System.

### **Wilderness Characteristics**

#### *Degree the Area Generally Appears to be Affected Primarily by the Forces of Nature*

Fish stocking occurs in the lower reaches of Independence Creek, and fish likely travel up and occupy the upper reaches. Aerial fish stocking may also occur in the upper reaches of Independence Creek. Fire suppression activities occurred in the area during the 2007 Inyo Complex wildfire. The area also has water diversions (including diversions and ditches near Tub Springs), old ranch foundations, fences and corrals. In addition, there are three prehistoric sites (lithic scatters).

Overall, the area is believed to have low ecological integrity. There is a departure from natural conditions due to the presence of invasive plant species (cheatgrass is abundant and salt cedar also occurs in the area). Fish stocking has also altered native aquatic assemblages. Water diversions have manipulated the species composition. The Inyo Complex wildfire burned through the area at moderate to high intensity in 2007. In 2008, a rain event produced flooding and mudflow event that washed a massive amount of sediment downstream. These catastrophic events impacted the hydrologic and soil conditions in the area. The impact to the springs from the 2008 flood event is not known. The air quality is nonattainment for pm10 (Owens Valley pm10 planning area).

### *Opportunities for Solitude or Primitive and Unconfined Recreation*

The area is located in the vicinity of a concentrated recreation area (Onion Valley), which has campgrounds, trailheads, and the Seven Pines Recreation Residence Tract. In addition, Highway 395 and the private land developments in the Owens Valley are highly visible from most of the area, except within the canyons. The proximity to roads, concentrated recreation area, and improvements limits the opportunity for solitude. There is nothing notable that would limit the opportunity for primitive or unconfined recreation. The area currently receives low to medium use, primarily focused around Seven Pines Recreation Residence Tract, Independence Creek and Rex Montis Mine Road. Hunting is a popular activity during the fall months.

### *Other Features of Value*

Features of this polygon include black oaks, riparian water birch (tracked by California Fish and Wildlife), and Inyo star-tulip, a Forest Service sensitive species. There are outstanding wildflower displays within the Inyo Complex fire area. Springs may contain rare spring snails. Tub Springs lies within the area.

### **Manageability**

The area is contiguous with an existing wilderness area (John Muir Wilderness) along the western edge of the polygon. The polygon is surrounded by roads and a private land parcel (Boron Springs) protrudes into the southeast corner of the polygon. The private land parcel is believed to be owned by the Los Angeles Department of Water and Power and is not developed. Bureau of Land Management land is also adjacent and is undeveloped. Most of the area is adjacent to lands managed by the Inyo National Forest. There are three water rights in the area.

### **Summary of Potential Suitability for Inclusion in the National Wilderness Preservation System**

The area has some developments, including water diversions, old ranch foundations, fences and corrals, which degrades the undeveloped quality. This polygon does not present an opportunity to protect ecological groups that may be minimally represented in the National Wilderness Preservation System. Ecological groups with less than 10 percent of their national extent in the National Wilderness Preservation System comprise a low number of acres. The natural quality is degraded by the presence of invasive plant species (cheatgrass and salt cedar), as well as the impact to the hydrologic and soil conditions from the 2007 Inyo Complex fire and 2008 flood and mudflow event. Fish stocking in the lower and upper reaches of Independence Creek has altered native aquatic assemblages. The air quality is nonattainment for pm10. The opportunity for solitude is degraded due to the proximity to developed recreation use, motorized road system, and visibility to Highway 395 and private land development. There is opportunity for primitive and unconfined recreation. The proximity to Onion Valley Road and recreation developments (south half of the polygon), as well as the adjacent private land parcel at Boron Springs (southeast side of the polygon) would make it difficult to manage for wilderness characteristics. There is limited opportunity to reshape the polygon (for map see Exhibit A – Inyo National Forest Evaluation Maps – Evaluation Map G.)

## **Polygon 1109 (Escarpment – Oak Creek)**

### **General Description**

Polygon 1109 (Escarpment-Oak Creek) consists of 1,318 acres ranging in elevation from 5,000 to 7,000 feet. It is contiguous to the John Muir Wilderness and is located along the Sierra Nevada escarpment between North Fork Oak Creek and South Fork Oak Creek, southeast of Baxter Pass

Trailhead. This is an oddly shaped polygon due to roads and private land parcels that protrude into the boundary along the north and southeastern edge of the polygon. The western portion follows the existing wilderness boundary. The polygon intersects with Tinemaha Inventoried Roadless Area (the majority of the area along the western portion of the polygon). Ecosystem type is xeric shrublands and blackbrush. The area is characterized by steep to precipitous rugged terrain in the canyons and moderate to gentle slopes on the alluvial fans and benches. The polygon is within the 2007 Inyo Complex (approximately 30,000 acre fire) and 2008 flood and mudflow event (Oak Creek).

National Vegetation Classification System data indicates 5 percent of the polygon (68 acres) consists of ecological groups, Great Basin foothill and lower montane riparian woodland and shrubland which have less than 10 percent of their national extent protected in the National Wilderness Preservation System.

### Wilderness Characteristics

#### *Degree the Area Generally Appears to be Affected Primarily by the Forces of Nature*

Overall, the area is believed to have low to moderate ecological integrity. There is a departure from natural conditions due to the presence of invasive plant species (cheatgrass is abundant and salt cedar also occurs in the area). The Inyo Complex wildfire burned through the area at moderate to high intensity in 2007. In 2008, a rain event produced flooding and debris flow that washed a massive amount of sediment downstream. These catastrophic events impacted the hydrologic and soil conditions in the area. South Fork Oak Creek jumped into a new channel during the flood event, and the channel morphology of both North Fork and South Fork Oak Creek were significantly impacted. Following these events, erosion rates in the area were accelerated. Within the area that was impacted by the fire, but not impacted by the flood, erosion rates have probably returned to background levels. Riparian vegetation is recovering, but is not likely at pre-fire and pre-flood canopy and density levels. There are invasive plants in the riparian areas. The air quality is nonattainment for pm10 (Owens Valley pm10 planning area). The area has Los Angeles Department of Water and Power water diversions on North Fork and South Fork Oak Creek. There are fences west of private property along the creek.

#### *Opportunities for Solitude or Primitive and Unconfined Recreation*

The area is bordered by roads that provide access to South Fork Oak Creek and North Fork Oak Creek, as well as to the Baxter Pass Trailhead. In addition, there are Los Angeles Department of Water and Power water diversions that are maintained in the area. There is a private land parcel (Bright Ranch) with developments adjacent to the polygon and there are also two shooting ranges in the vicinity. Highway 395 and the private land developments in the Owens Valley are visible, except within the canyons and deep stream channels. There is nothing notable that would limit the opportunity for primitive or unconfined recreation. The area currently receives low to medium amount of use, primarily focused around the roads in the area.

#### *Other Features of Value*

This polygon includes black oaks, riparian water birch (tracked by California Fish and Wildlife), and outstanding wildflower displays within the Inyo Complex fire area. Post-flood geography is also a feature of value.

## Manageability

The area is contiguous with an existing wilderness area, the John Muir Wilderness, along the western edge of the polygon. Hydrologic conditions in the area are somewhat unstable (large gullies on Oak Creek), although are recovering and stabilizing. The polygon is bordered by roads and a private land parcel (Bright Ranch). The area has Los Angeles Department of Water and Power water diversions, which need to be maintained. It is an oddly shaped polygon due to roads and private land parcels that protrude into the boundary along the north and southeastern edge of the polygon. There is a shooting range in the vicinity of the polygon that could complicate management of the area.

## Summary of Potential Suitability for Inclusion in the National Wilderness Preservation System

This polygon does not present an opportunity to protect ecological groups that may be minimally represented in the National Wilderness Preservation System. Ecological groups with less than 10 percent of their national extent in the National Wilderness Preservation System comprise a low number of acres. The natural quality is degraded by the presence of invasive plant species (cheatgrass and salt cedar), as well as the impact to the hydrologic and soil conditions from the 2007 Inyo Complex fire and 2008 flood and mudflow event. Air quality is nonattainment for pm10. The opportunity for solitude is degraded due to the proximity to roads, visibility to Highway 395 and private land development, and noise from target shooting range. The area has Los Angeles Department of Water and Power water diversions on both North Fork and South Fork Oak Creek. There is opportunity for primitive and unconfined recreation. The proximity to roads along the South Fork Oak Creek and North Fork Oak Creek, as well as the adjacent private land parcel at Bright Ranch, could make it difficult to manage for wilderness characteristics. There is not an opportunity to reshape the polygon, as it is an oddly shaped polygon that is elongated horizontally and is drawn tightly around roads and private land parcels. (For map see Exhibit A – Inyo National Forest Evaluation Maps – Evaluation Map G.)

## **Polygon 1110 (Escarpment between Sawmill Creek and Baxter Pass Trailhead)**

### General Description

Polygon 1110 (Escarpment between Sawmill Creek and Baxter Pass Trailhead) consists of 1,650 acres with elevations ranging from 4,500 to 10,000 feet. It is contiguous to the John Muir Wilderness and is located along the Sierra Nevada escarpment south of Sawmill Creek and north of Baxter Pass Trailhead. It is an oddly shaped polygon due to roads and private land parcels that protrude into the boundary along the eastern edge of the polygon, and nearly split the polygon in half. The western portion follows the existing wilderness boundary. The area intersects with Tinemaha Inventoried Roadless Area along the northern portion of the polygon. The ecosystem type is sagebrush. A small portion of the area is within Sierra Nevada bighorn sheep designated critical habitat. The area is characterized by steep to precipitous rugged terrain in the canyons and moderate to gentle slopes on the alluvial fans and benches. It is within the 2007 Inyo Complex (a 30,000-acre fire).

National Vegetation Classification System data indicates 2 percent of the polygon (36 acres) consists of an ecological group that has less than 10 percent of its national extent protected in the National Wilderness Preservation System.

## Wilderness Characteristics

### *Degree the Area Generally Appears to be Affected Primarily by the Forces of Nature*

Overall, the area is believed to have low ecological integrity. There is a departure from natural conditions due to the presence of invasive plant species (cheatgrass is abundant). The Inyo Complex wildfire burned through the area at moderate to high intensity in 2007, which impacted hydrologic and soil conditions in the area. Erosion rates in the area were accelerated following the fire, but are recovering. Riparian vegetation around the springs is recovering, but is not likely at pre-fire canopy levels. Air quality is nonattainment for pm10 (Owens Valley pm10 planning area). Grazing is occurring in the area. A few historic structural remains occur in the area. Known sites include several prehistoric sites (milling slicks and lithic scatter) and a historic rock structure, a stone foundation near Baxter Pass. No other developments were noted.

### *Opportunities for Solitude or Primitive and Unconfined Recreation*

The area is in the vicinity of roads and within 1.5 miles of Highway 395, which are visible and can be heard from much of the area. One road and private land parcel dissects the polygon, nearly splitting it half. There is nothing notable that would limit the opportunity for primitive or unconfined recreation. The area is popular for hunting and receives low to medium use during the fall months. The area receives a low amount of use other times of the year.

### *Other Features of Value*

The polygon includes scenic views of Inyo Mountains, alluvial fans with springs, rare pinyon rockcress and outstanding spring wildflower displays within the Inyo Complex fire area.

## Manageability

The area is contiguous with an existing wilderness area, the John Muir Wilderness, along the western edge of the polygon. The polygon is surrounded by roads. A road and private land parcel protrude into the middle of the polygon splitting it nearly in half. Because there are four roads that are in the vicinity or cherry-stemmed in the area, it could be difficult to prevent vehicle trespass. Bureau of Land Management land (eastern boundary) is adjacent and is undeveloped. A small portion of the area also contains designated critical habitat for Sierra Nevada Bighorn Sheep, which may require active management under the Endangered Species Act.

## Summary of Potential Suitability for Inclusion in the National Wilderness Preservation System

There are few developments and their effect to the undeveloped quality is negligible. This polygon does not present an opportunity to protect ecological groups that may be minimally represented in the National Wilderness Preservation System. Ecological groups with less than 10 percent of their national extent in the National Wilderness Preservation System comprise a low number of acres. The natural quality is degraded by the presence of invasive plant species (cheatgrass), as well as the impact to the hydrologic and soil conditions from the 2007 Inyo Complex fire. Air quality is nonattainment for pm10. The opportunity for solitude is degraded due to the proximity to roads and visibility to Highway 395 and noise from the highway. There is opportunity for primitive and unconfined recreation. Grazing is occurring in the area. The proximity to roads (that includes cherry-stemmed roads), as well as the adjacent private land parcel, could make it difficult to manage for wilderness characteristics. There is not an opportunity to reshape the polygon, as it is an oddly shaped polygon that is elongated horizontally and is drawn tightly around roads and the forest boundary. (For map see Exhibit A – Inyo National Forest Evaluation Maps – Evaluation Map G.)

## **Polygon 1112 (Escarpment between Goodale Creek and Sawmill Creek)**

### **General Description**

Polygon 1112 consists of 4,949 acres with elevations ranging from 4,500 to 10,500 feet. It is contiguous to the John Muir Wilderness and is located along the Sierra Nevada escarpment south of Goodale Creek and north of Sawmill Creek, and in the vicinity of Division Creek Powerhouse and Sawmill Pass Trailhead. This is an oddly shaped polygon due to the existing wilderness boundary, which excludes motorized trails, along the western edge of the polygon. The area intersects with Tinemaha Inventoried Roadless Area (northern portion of the polygon). The ecosystem types are sagebrush and xeric shrublands and blackbrush. A small portion of the area is Sierra Nevada bighorn sheep designated critical habitat. The area is characterized by steep to precipitous rugged terrain in the canyons and moderate to gentle slopes on the alluvial fans and lava flows.

National Vegetation Classification System data indicates 35 percent of the polygon (1,721 acres) consists of ecological groups that have less than 10 percent of their national extent protected in the National Wilderness Preservation System. The most prevalent is Inter-Mountain Basin big sagebrush shrubland. An additional 540 acres of the polygon consists of Great Basin pinyon-juniper woodland, which has less than 15 percent of its national extent protected in the National Wilderness Preservation System.

### **Wilderness Characteristics**

#### *Degree the Area Generally Appears to be Affected Primarily by the Forces of Nature*

The Los Angeles Department of Water and Power Division Creek Powerhouse and associated facilities is in the vicinity or may be within the area. The area has a Los Angeles Department of Water and Power water diversion dam on Division Creek. There has been little cultural resource survey work in the area. There are approximately twenty documented sites that include prehistoric rock shelters, lithic and artifact scatters, as well as portions of the Division Creek Power Plant, townsite, and construction camp within the area.

Overall, the area is believed to have low ecological integrity. There is a departure from natural conditions due to the presence of invasive plant species (Russian thistle and cheatgrass are abundant). Frequent fires have resulted in a change to species composition. Fish stocking has also altered native aquatic assemblages. The conditions of riparian areas are poor due to invasive plant species.

#### *Opportunities for Solitude or Primitive and Unconfined Recreation*

The area is dissected by motorized trails, and is in the vicinity of forest roads and the Division Creek Powerhouse. In addition, Highway 395 is also visible, except within the lava flow area, and can be heard from much of the area. Proximity to motorized recreation (roads and trails), the Division Creek Powerhouse and Highway 395, limit opportunities for solitude. A portion of the area is popular for motorized recreation (four wheel drive), dispersed camping, mineral prospecting and hiking (western edge, near Armstrong Canyon). The Sawmill Pass Trail is also in the area and receives some hiking use. Hunting is a popular activity in the fall.

### *Other Features of Value*

The polygon includes rare narrow leaved cottonwood, Panamint Mountain lupine, and Big Pine biscuit root. Springs in the area may contain rare spring snails. There are scenic lava flows and a scenic entrance to Spooky Canyon. The area includes outstanding spring wildflower displays.

### **Manageability**

The area is contiguous with an existing wilderness area, the John Muir Wilderness, along the western edge of the polygon. Motorized trails located in the area, as well as forest roads in the vicinity (or cherry-stemmed), would make it difficult to prevent vehicle incursions. Bureau of Land Management land (eastern boundary) is adjacent and is undeveloped. A small portion of the area also contains designated critical habitat for Sierra Nevada Bighorn Sheep, which may require active management under the Endangered Species Act.

### **Summary of Potential Suitability for Inclusion in the National Wilderness Preservation System**

There are some developments, including the Los Angeles Department of Water and Power Division Creek Powerhouse and water diversion dam and their effect to the undeveloped quality is localized. This polygon presents a limited opportunity to protect ecological groups that may be minimally represented in the National Wilderness Preservation System. Ecological groups with less than 10 percent of their national extent in the National Wilderness Preservation System comprise 1,721 acres. An ecological group with less than 15 percent of its national extent in the National Wilderness Preservation System comprises an additional 540 acres. The natural quality is degraded by the presence of invasive plant species (Russian thistle and cheatgrass). Invasive plant species are present within riparian areas and fish stocking has also altered native aquatic assemblages. The opportunity for solitude is degraded due to the proximity to motorized roads and trails, Division Creek Powerhouse, and visibility to Highway 395 and noise from the highway. There may be some opportunity for primitive and unconfined recreation. The proximity to roads and motorized trails would make it difficult to manage for wilderness characteristics. There is not an opportunity to reshape the polygon, as the western edge of the polygon which adjoins designated wilderness contains motorized trails. (For map see Exhibit A – Inyo National Forest Evaluation Maps – Evaluation Map G.)

## **Polygon 1115 (Escarpment – Tinemaha Creek)**

### **General Description**

Polygon 1115 (Escarpment-Tinemaha Creek) consists of 3,485 acres with elevations ranging from 5,600 to 6,400 feet. It is contiguous to the John Muir Wilderness along the southwest and southern boundaries and is located along the Sierra Nevada escarpment. It includes Birch Creek, Tinemaha Creek and Red Mountain Creek, and is in the vicinity of Red Lake Trailhead. This is an oddly shaped polygon due to roads along the northwestern edge of the polygon which separates this area from the existing wilderness boundary (there is a gap between this portion of the polygon and existing wilderness boundary). The existing wilderness boundary was drawn to exclude motorized trails and the forest boundary along the eastern side of the boundary (private land parcel and Bureau of Land Management land). Motorized trails that run east to west dissect this polygon in three locations. The polygon intersects with the Tinemaha Inventoried Roadless Area along the southern portion of the polygon, south of motorized trails and Red Mountain Creek. The ecosystem type is sagebrush. The area contains gentle slopes.

National Vegetation Classification System data provided by The Wilderness Society indicates 84 percent of the polygon (2,935 acres) consists of ecological groups that have less than 10 percent of their national extent protected in the National Wilderness Preservation System. The most prevalent group is Inter-Mountain Basin big sagebrush shrubland. An additional 540 acres of the polygon consists of Great Basin pinyon-juniper woodland, which has less than 15 percent of its national extent protected in the National Wilderness Preservation System.

### Wilderness Characteristics

#### *Degree the Area Generally Appears to be Affected Primarily by the Forces of Nature*

The polygon has low to moderate ecological integrity. There has been moderate human impact to plant communities and there is a departure from natural conditions due to the presence of invasive plant species (cheatgrass and Russian thistle are abundant and increasing). This area does contain several unauthorized or gated authorized roads and may also contain Los Angeles Department of Water and Power infrastructure. However, the use in this area is very limited, and impacts to wildlife are minimal. The area is largely unsurveyed for cultural resources, but there are known cultural resource sites including two prehistoric lithic scatters. Historic fish stocking has altered native aquatic assemblages. Grazing has occurred in this area.

#### *Opportunities for Solitude or Primitive and Unconfined Recreation*

There are three motorized trails that run east to west and dissect the polygon in three locations, which limits the opportunity for solitude. In addition, the topography is gentle slopes, with not much screening. Highway 395 is visible from much of the area. Nothing was noted related to primitive and unconfined recreation, although there may be opportunity for primitive-type recreation activities, such as cross-country hiking and general forest exploration.

#### *Other Features of Value*

The polygon includes springs that may contain rare spring snails. Both Panamint Mountains lupine and riparian water birch which is tracked by California Fish and Wildlife are found in the area.

### Manageability

The area is contiguous with existing wilderness on the southern end of the polygon; however there are multiple motorized trails that bisect the area. The northern portion of the polygon is separated from the existing wilderness boundary by a road. There are private land parcels along the boundary of the polygon, including lands owned by Los Angeles Department of Water and Power. The area is also adjacent to lands managed by the Bureau of Land Management.

### Summary of Potential Suitability for Inclusion in the National Wilderness Preservation System

There were no developments identified, although there could be some Los Angeles Department of Water and Power infrastructure (tunnels) in the area. This polygon presents a limited opportunity to protect ecological groups that may be minimally represented in the National Wilderness Preservation System. Ecological groups with less than 10 percent of their national extent in the National Wilderness Preservation System comprise 2,935 acres. An ecological group with less than 15 percent of its national extent in the National Wilderness Preservation System comprises an additional 540 acres. The natural quality has been degraded by the presence of invasive plant species (cheat grass and Russian thistle). Fish stocking has altered native aquatic assemblages. Grazing has also impacted soils and drainages. Air quality is nonattainment for pm<sub>10</sub>. The

opportunity for solitude is degraded due to the motorized trail system and the visibility to Highway 395. There is opportunity for primitive and unconfined recreation. The proximity to roads, motorized trails, as well as the adjacent private land parcels would make it difficult to manage for wilderness characteristics. The location of the roads, motorized trails, and forest boundary do not allow the polygon to be reshaped in a way that would make it more manageable. (For map see Exhibit A – Inyo National Forest Evaluation Maps – Evaluation Map G.)

## **Polygon 1116 (Escarpment – McMurry Meadow)**

### **General Description**

Polygon 1116 consists of 2,437 acres with elevations ranging from 6,800 to 8,500 feet. It is contiguous to the John Muir Wilderness and is located along the Sierra Nevada escarpment between Little Pine Creek on the north and Tinemaha Creek to the south. It is southwest of the Crater Mountain Area of Critical Environmental Concern (Bureau of Land Management) and includes McMurry Meadow. It is an oddly shaped polygon due to existing wilderness boundary on the western edge and private land parcels on the northern and southern boundary. Motorized trails dissect the north half of the polygon. It intersects a small portion of the Tinemaha Inventoried Roadless Area along the western edge of the polygon. Ecosystem types include mountain mahogany and sagebrush. It lies within the Sierra Nevada bighorn sheep designated critical habitat.

National Vegetation Classification System data indicates 61 percent of the polygon (1,478 acres) consists of ecological groups that have less than 10 percent of their national extent protected in the National Wilderness Preservation System. The most prevalent group is Inter-Mountain Basin big sagebrush shrubland. An additional 911 acres of the polygon consists of Great Basin pinyon-juniper woodland, which has less than 15 percent of its national extent protected in the National Wilderness Preservation System.

### **Wilderness Characteristics**

#### *Degree the Area Generally Appears to be Affected Primarily by the Forces of Nature*

This polygon has moderate ecological integrity. There has been high human impact to plant communities. There is a departure from natural conditions due to the presence of invasive plant species (cheatgrass and Russian thistle are abundant and increasing). Historic fish stocking has altered native aquatic assemblages. There are perennial stream channels such as Birch Creek, Fuller Creek and an unnamed perennial flow through this area. Fire in 2002 contributed sediment to the channels, impacts to stream morphology and the function is unknown. The fire also resulted in slow vegetation recovery due to limited moisture. Erosion is likely at pre-fire levels. Meadows are mostly functional-at-risk (watershed condition), but mostly stable as old watershed channel structures provide stability. There are some stream channel structures, but they are not substantial and barely noticeable. Roughly half the area has been surveyed. Five documented cultural resource sites including prehistoric lithic and artifact scatters.. The air quality is excellent.

#### *Opportunities for Solitude or Primitive and Unconfined Recreation*

The topography is moderate to gentle, with some screening from slopes, canyons, and drainages. There are very few trees that provide screening. There are motorized trails in the north half of the polygon, which limit the opportunity for solitude. The area receives low to moderate amounts of use, primarily focused around the roads, motorized trails and Birch Lake Trailhead.

### *Other Features of Value*

The polygon includes Sierra Nevada bighorn sheep designated critical habitat. Springs may contain rare springsnails. The area includes the sensitive plant, Inyo star-tulip, as well as riparian water birch, a unique ecosystem tracked by California Fish and Wildlife. McMurray Meadows is a large, botanically diverse, unique meadow on the eastern escarpment.

### **Manageability**

Roads and motorized trails dissect the north half of the polygon. There is a road along the eastern boundary which narrows the polygon along the southern half. There is also a private land parcel that protrudes into the southern half of the polygon. The area contains designated critical habitat for Sierra Nevada bighorn sheep, which may require active management under the Endangered Species Act. There are two water rights.

### **Summary of Potential Suitability for Inclusion in the National Wilderness Preservation System**

This polygon presents a limited opportunity to protect ecological groups that may be minimally represented in the National Wilderness Preservation System. Ecological groups with less than 10 percent of their national extent in the National Wilderness Preservation System comprise 1,478 acres. An ecological group with less than 15 percent of its national extent in the National Wilderness Preservation System comprises an additional 911 acres. The natural quality has been degraded by the presence of invasive plant species (cheat grass and Russian thistle). Fish stocking has altered native aquatic assemblages. The 2002 fire impacted the hydrologic conditions and resulted in slow vegetation recovery. Meadows are mostly functional-at-risk (watershed condition), but mostly stable as old watershed channel structures provide stability. Air quality is excellent. There were few developments identified. The opportunity for solitude is degraded due to the proximity to roads and motorized trail system. There is opportunity for primitive and unconfined recreation. The proximity to roads, motorized trails, as well as the adjacent private land parcels would make it difficult to manage for wilderness characteristics. The location of the roads, motorized trails, and forest boundary do not allow the polygon to be reshaped in a way that would make it more manageable. (For map see Exhibit A – Inyo National Forest Evaluation Maps – Evaluation Map E or Evaluation Map G.)

## **Polygon 1140 (Coyote)**

### **General Description**

Polygon 1140 (Coyote) consists of 75,299 acres with elevations ranging from 4,800 to 10,400 feet. It is located southeast of Bishop Creek Recreation Area and southwest of Bishop, west of Big Pine, and north of Big Pine Creek Recreation Area. The southwest portion of the polygon is contiguous with the John Muir Wilderness. There is nothing notable regarding the polygon shape, except that there are private land inholdings and roads that protrude into this polygon. The western boundary follows Highway 168 and recreation developments in Bishop Creek, as well as the John Muir Wilderness boundary along the southwest portion of the polygon. The southern boundary follows road and recreation developments in Big Pine Creek and the eastern boundary follows the forest boundary (Bureau of Land Management and private land). Numerous motorized trails dissect this area from the north to south and east to west. In addition, there are private land inholdings and the roads that protrude into this polygon. The polygon intersects with Coyote North, Coyote Southeast and Tinemaha Inventoried Roadless Areas. Ecosystem types include alpine, Jeffrey pine, mountain mahogany, pinyon-juniper, red fir, sagebrush, sub-alpine forest, white fir, and xeric shrublands and blackbrush. The topography is highly variable, with

steep to gentle varied aspects. There are gentle open ridges at the top, with minimal vegetation, steep slopes and canyons to the north and along the west edge dropping into Bishop Creek.

National Vegetation Classification System data indicates 29 percent of the area of the polygon (21,951 acres) consists of ecological groups that have less than 10 percent of their national extent protected in the National Wilderness Preservation System. The most prevalent groups are Inter-Mountain Basin montane sagebrush steppe, Inter-Mountain Basin big sagebrush shrubland, and Great Basin xeric mixed sagebrush shrubland. An additional 27,271 acres of the polygon consists of Great Basin pinyon-juniper woodland, and Rocky Mountain aspen forest and woodland, which have less than 15 percent of its national extent protected in the National Wilderness Preservation System.

## Wilderness Characteristics

### *Degree the Area Generally Appears to be Affected Primarily by the Forces of Nature*

There are structures related to Schober Mine (western portion of the polygon, west of Lookout Mountain) and these are deteriorating. There are other mining prospects noted on the United States Geological Survey Quad in the western portion of the polygon. There was also historic mining activity. Scattered mining sites are noticeable in the lower elevations. They are mostly abandoned, but the scars are evident. The area includes active grazing allotments and improvements, as well as a landing strip that is still evident. Most of the area is unsurveyed for cultural resources, but there are two known prehistoric sites with lithic scatter and a rock cairn of indeterminate age. Public comments indicate there are trails used by mountain bikers in the area. The polygon has moderate to high ecological integrity, reflecting conditions that would normally be associated with the area absent human intervention. There is minimal to moderate impact to plant communities, however, there is cheat grass (invasive plant species) at lower elevations and it is increasing. It is not known if there are aquatic invasive species within the area, but chytrid fungus is most likely present. Stocked trout reside in most of the perennial streams, displacing native invertebrates. Historic fish stocking has altered native aquatic assemblages. Most likely there is not active fish stocking, but there are remnant populations from stocking in previous years. There may be aerial stocking occasionally. The Coyote Flat area is managed for rare amphibians including the Sierra Nevada yellow-legged frog, so adjacent streams may not be stocked.

This polygon is very large and is adjacent to or includes developed areas such as trailheads, campgrounds, trails, day-use areas and dispersed camping sites. The majority of this polygon does not have large human impacts to wildlife. The area does provide contiguous habitat for wildlife. Within the Bishop Creek wildland-urban interface there is planning for fuels treatments. Shannon Canyon and other canyons are used as cattle trails to access higher elevations. The area includes contiguous habitat for aquatics. Some streams flow to Big Pine Creek, which flows to diversions of the Owens Valley. Fish barriers prevent introduced trout from invading frog habitat. Along the escarpment (eastern portion of the polygon), streams that flow down the escarpment do not make it to the Owens River due to diversions and sub-terrain flows. There are several lakes and numerous perennial stream channels, including Coyote Creek, Baker Creek, Cow Creek and Onion Creek. There are also numerous areas with high water tables and meadows. There are legacy and current grazing impacts to meadows and riparian areas. Meadow restoration projects have been implemented. Areas are mostly stable and the degree and severity of current impacts is unknown. There are legacy and current grazing impacts to meadows and riparian areas. Meadow restoration projects have been implemented. There are localized areas of impacts to soil conditions related to legacy grazing and mining, dispersed camping, and areas of public land that

were previously private land. There was a fire in 2007 along the eastern escarpment with slow recovery due to limited moisture. Erosion is likely at pre-fire levels. The air quality is excellent.

#### *Opportunities for Solitude or Primitive and Unconfined Recreation*

The topography is highly variable with steep to gentle, varied aspects. There are gentle open ridges at top, with minimal vegetation, steep slopes and canyons to the north and along the west edge dropping into Bishop Creek. There is some screening due to topography and vegetation. There is some visibility to developments in Owens Valley (including Highway 395), as well as the Bishop Creek Recreation Area and the Big Pine Creek Recreation Area. The polygon is close to recreation developments along the western (Bishop Creek) and southern (Big Pine Creek) perimeter. Housing developments and recreation from local neighborhoods occur within adjacent areas.

Sights and sounds within the polygon are affected by off highway vehicle recreation, recreational shooting and dispersed camping, which are popular activities in the area. Bishop Creek (Highway 168) has developed recreation facilities. The south side of the polygon is Big Pine Creek which has concentrated recreation use and developed recreation facilities. Along the eastern portion of the polygon (along the escarpment), Highway 395 can be heard, along with the buzzing of the power lines nearby. There is a moderate to high potential for encounters with other visitors. The area is popular during the spring and summer, and during hunting season in the fall. There is minimal use during the winter. Use is primarily focused along motorized trails and developed recreation sites adjacent to area. Shannon Canyon and other canyons along the eastern escarpment are used as cattle trails to access higher elevations. There are opportunities for primitive and unconfined recreation, particularly in the Green Lake area. There are opportunities for primitive-type recreation activities, including hiking, fishing, hunting, and general forest exploration with some degree of challenge.

#### *Other Features of Value*

Many rare plant and sensitive plant species, including Father Crowley's lupine, Inyo beardtongue, Big Pine biscuitroot, and Morefield's cinquefoil are found in the polygon. Springs within the area may contain rare springsnails. Coyote itself is a unique geologic feature, including a high plateau extending from the Sierra Nevada, with mixed carbonate and granitic geology and relict moraines. The area includes outstanding views of glaciers, the high Sierra, Big Pine Creek, Bishop Creek and the White Mountains.

#### **Manageability**

This is a large polygon located between the John Muir Wilderness and the forest boundary (within one mile of the Owens Valley), and bordered by concentrated recreation areas along the western and southern perimeter. There are numerous cherry-stem roads and motorized trails throughout the polygon along the edge and in the middle. There are six private land inholdings in the middle of the polygon. Southern California Edison operates a diversion at Green Creek. There may be a pipeline from Green Creek. There are seventeen water rights within the polygon. There is an important mountain bike route (on old nonsystem road) that connects through this polygon from Road 31E305. There are mountain bike trails leading into Big Pine Canyon. This area may be used for tribal traditional purposes (Paiute Mountain School). There are special uses authorized including outfitter guides (packer and mountain guides), as well as livestock grazing and improvements in the area.

## Summary of Potential Suitability for Inclusion in the National Wilderness Preservation System

Within this polygon, there is evidence of grazing management, historic mining and historic fish stocking. There are developments related to historic mining activity, range improvements, and a landing strip that is still evident on the ground. The area is believed to have moderate to high ecological integrity. This polygon presents an opportunity to protect ecological groups that may be minimally represented in the National Wilderness Preservation System. Ecological groups with less than 10 percent of their national extent in the National Wilderness Preservation System comprise 21,951 acres. Ecological groups with less than 15 percent of their national extent in the National Wilderness Preservation System comprise an additional 22,271 acres. The opportunity for solitude is degraded due to the proximity to concentrated recreation use, motorized recreation (roads and motorized trails), as well as the proximity to the Owens Valley, Highway 395 and Highway 168 (Bishop Creek). There may be opportunity for primitive and unconfined recreation. There is not an opportunity to reshape the polygon to make it suitable or manageable for wilderness characteristics. The highest potential opportunity may be in the vicinity of Green Lake and The Hunchback, adjoining existing wilderness. However, this would create an oddly shaped finger, which would be impractical to manage for wilderness characteristics. There are general tribal concerns regarding tribal access and use. (For map see Exhibit A – Inyo National Forest Evaluation Maps – Evaluation Map E.)

### **Polygon 1147 (Pine Creek East)**

#### General Description

Polygon 1147 (Pine Creek East) consists of 1,351 acres with elevations ranging from 7,200 to over 10,000 feet. It is contiguous with the John Muir Wilderness along the eastern and northern boundaries and is located in Pine Creek, in the vicinity of Pine Creek Mine, which was one of the largest producers of tungsten in the nation by the 1940s. This is an oddly shaped polygon that is bounded by the paved road, Pine Creek Mine and patented mining claims (private land in Morgan Canyon). The existing wilderness boundary excludes these features. The area intersects with Wheeler Ridge Inventoried Roadless Area and is an important Sierra Nevada bighorn sheep lambing area. Ecosystem types include sagebrush and subalpine forest. The area includes steep, rock/talus slopes with sparse vegetation. There are extremely steep rocky canyon walls with loose scree slopes between sheer ridges and rock walls.

National Vegetation Classification System data indicates 22 percent of the polygon (296 acres) consists of an ecological group, Inter-Mountain Basin big sagebrush shrubland that has less than 10 percent of its national extent protected in the National Wilderness Preservation System.

#### Wilderness Characteristics

##### *Degree the Area Generally Appears to be Affected Primarily by the Forces of Nature*

There is evidence of mining activity that is substantially noticeable, including an old town site, portal, mill remains, powder magazine building, roads, platforms, towers, mining debris, and tailing piles. Tram towers and other mining structures are in various places along Morgan Creek. The Pine Creek mining complex operators indicate they have re-vegetated mine areas that may be within this polygon with a grass seed mix designed by California Department of Fish and Wildlife to provide feed for Sierra Nevada bighorn sheep.

The remains of the abandoned town of Sheelite (roads, berms, levelled areas, piping, machinery and milling equipment piles) are included in this area, as are water impoundments (tailings pond dam) owned by Union Carbide.

This polygon has moderate to high ecological integrity. There are no known invasive plant species present. This area is located adjacent to a paved road and a developed mining site, but the habitat within the polygon has not been impacted by humans. Included in the area are introduced trout, maintained by fish stocking, but also self-reproducing. There are reduced frog populations due to the trout. Stocked fish do not allow for connectivity of isolated frog populations. Fish are most likely self-sustaining, but this is influenced by stocked fish downstream. Aquatic ecological composition has been altered by humans. Perennial stream channels include Morgan Creek and Pine Creek. Mining activity has likely resulted in some water quality impairment; however, it is not State-listed as impaired or threatened. Tailings ponds have limited hydrologic function of pine creek. There is a mapped meadow on Morgan Creek, but the condition is unknown. Riparian vegetation is found throughout the area. The tailings ponds have limited riparian vegetation on Pine Creek. The air quality is excellent. Tailings ponds limited air quality in the past.

#### *Opportunities for Solitude or Primitive and Unconfined Recreation*

There are extremely steep rocky canyon walls with loose scree slopes between sheer ridges and rock walls. There is some screening due to narrow canyons. The polygon is near Pine Creek Road, which is a paved road that provides access to Pine Creek Trailhead and pack station. There are no motorized trails, with the exception of the four wheel drive trail along Morgan Creek that provides access to patented mining claims (private land). The opportunity for solitude is degraded by these features. There is nothing notable that would limit the opportunity for primitive or unconfined recreation. The area receives a moderate amount of recreation use in the summer months, with very little use in the winter. Climbing in the crags in the southern and eastern parts of the area is a popular activity and occurs year around. The area also is a popular viewing area for Sierra Nevada bighorn sheep, particularly in the winter and spring.

#### *Other Features of Value*

The polygon includes habitat for Yosemite Toads, with some occupied habitat. Within the area are Sierra Nevada bighorn sheep, including a popular viewing area. There is outstanding geologic scenery including towering rock walls that provide a spectacular setting.

#### **Manageability**

The area is contiguous with an existing wilderness area (John Muir Wilderness) along the northern and eastern boundaries. The southern boundary of the polygon is Pine Creek Road, and there are patented mining claims and private land in Morgan Canyon, along the western boundary of the polygon. There is a four wheel drive road in Morgan Canyon to access the patented mining claims. There is also a private inholding at the end of Pine Creek Road (Pine Creek Mine). These features are substantially noticeable, impacting manageability of the area for wilderness characteristics. The existing wilderness boundary was drawn to exclude these features. The area contains designated critical habitat for Sierra Nevada bighorn sheep, which may require active management under the Endangered Species Act. This polygon includes extremely important lambing areas for Sierra Nevada bighorn sheep. Extensive climbing, including commercially guided, occurs in this area. There are many fixed climbing anchors, mostly placed with power drills.

## Summary of Potential Suitability for Inclusion in the National Wilderness Preservation System

There was extensive mining activity in the area. The area has developments related to the mining activity that are substantially noticeable. The natural quality has been altered by the mining activity and features; however, the ecological integrity is moderate to high. This polygon does not present an opportunity to protect ecological groups that may be minimally represented in the National Wilderness Preservation System. Ecological groups with less than 10 percent of their national extent in the National Wilderness Preservation System comprise a low number of acres. The opportunity for solitude is degraded due to proximity to roads, Pine Creek Mine, and four wheel drive trail that provides access to patented mining claims (private land). There is opportunity for primitive and unconfined recreation. The proximity to roads and mining features, including patented mining claims on private land, make it difficult to manage for wilderness characteristics. The wilderness boundary as currently drawn, excludes these features. There is not an opportunity to reshape this polygon. (For map see Exhibit A – Inyo National Forest Evaluation Maps – Evaluation Map E.)

### **Polygon 1148 (Pine Creek West)**

#### General Description

Polygon 1148 (Pine Creek West) consists of 1,756 acres with elevations ranging from 8,000 to 13,000 feet. It is contiguous with the John Muir Wilderness along the western and southern boundaries and is located in Pine Creek, in the vicinity of Pine Creek Mine, Pine Creek Trailhead, and Pine Creek Pack Station. It is an oddly shaped polygon that is bounded Pine Creek Road (including trailheads and pack station) in the southeast corner, and private land (patented mining claim) and four wheel drive road along Morgan Creek on the east. The existing wilderness boundary along the south, west and north excludes these features. The polygon intersects with Wheeler Ridge and Horton Inventoried Roadless Areas. Ecosystem types include red fir and subalpine forest. It includes steep terrain with talus slopes and alpine vegetation.

National Vegetation Classification System data indicates 8 percent of the polygon (136 acres) consists of two ecological groups, Inter-Mountain Basin big sagebrush shrubland, and Great Basin foothill and lower montane riparian woodland and shrubland, which have less than 10 percent of its national extent protected in the National Wilderness Preservation System.

#### Wilderness Characteristics

##### *Degree the Area Generally Appears to be Affected Primarily by the Forces of Nature*

There has been extensive mining activity in the area. There is evidence of mining activity that is substantially noticeable, including roads, platforms, towers and mining debris. Tram towers and other mining structures are in various places along Morgan Creek. The Pine Creek mining complex operators have reportedly re-vegetated mine areas that may be within this polygon with a grass seed mix designed by California Department of Fish and Wildlife to provide feed for Sierra Nevada bighorn sheep.

The polygon has moderate to high ecological integrity. There are no known invasive plant species present. This area is located adjacent to a paved road and adjacent to a developed mining site, but the habitat within the polygon has not been impacted by humans. It includes introduced trout, maintained by fish stocking, but also self-reproducing. There are reduced frog populations due to trout. Stocked fish do not allow for connectivity of isolated frog populations. Fish are most likely self-sustaining, but are influenced by stocked fish downstream. Aquatic ecological composition

has been altered by humans. Perennial stream channels include Morgan Creek and Pine Creek. Mining activity has likely resulted in some water quality impairment; however, it is not State-listed as impaired or threatened. Tailings ponds have limited hydrologic function of pine creek. There is a mapped meadow on Morgan Creek, but the condition is unknown. There is riparian vegetation throughout the area. The tailings ponds have limited riparian vegetation on Pine Creek. The air quality is excellent, though tailings ponds limited air quality in the past.

#### *Opportunities for Solitude or Primitive and Unconfined Recreation*

The area includes extremely steep terrain with alpine vegetation providing some screening. The polygon is near Pine Creek Road, which is a paved road that provides access to Pine Creek Trailhead and pack station. There are no motorized trails, with the exception of the four wheel drive trail along Morgan Creek that provides access to patented mining claims (private land). There is nothing notable that would limit the opportunity for primitive or unconfined recreation. There are designated trails in the area, including trails to Gable Lakes and Pine Lake that receive low to moderate use.

#### *Other Features of Value*

The area is a habitat for Yosemite Toads, with some occupied habitat.

#### **Manageability**

The area is contiguous with an existing wilderness area, the John Muir Wilderness Area, along the north, west and southern boundaries. The southeastern corner of the polygon is Pine Creek Road, trailheads and pack station. There is private land (patented mining claims) and a four wheel drive road in Morgan Canyon, along the eastern boundary of the polygon. There is also a private inholding at the end of Pine Creek Road (Pine Creek Mine). These features are substantially noticeable, impacting manageability of the area for wilderness characteristics. The existing wilderness boundary was drawn to exclude these features. There is a pack station that is under special use permit that uses the area.

#### **Summary of Potential Suitability for Inclusion in the National Wilderness Preservation System**

There was extensive mining activity and fish stocking in the area. The area is in proximity to developments related to the mining activity that are substantially noticeable. This polygon does not present an opportunity to protect ecological groups that may be minimally represented in the National Wilderness Preservation System. Ecological groups with less than 10 percent of their national extent in the National Wilderness Preservation System comprise a low number of acres. The natural quality has been altered by mining activities; however the ecological integrity is moderate to high. The opportunity for solitude is degraded due to proximity to roads, Pine Creek Mine and a four wheel drive trail that provides access to patented mining claims (private land). There is opportunity for primitive and unconfined recreation. The proximity to roads and mining features (including patented mining claims on private land) make it difficult to manage for wilderness characteristics. The wilderness boundary as currently drawn, excludes these features. There is not an opportunity to reshape this polygon. (For map see Exhibit A – Inyo National Forest Evaluation Maps – Evaluation Map E.)

## **Polygon 1154 (Rock Creek East and Sand Canyon)**

### **General Description**

Polygon 1154 (Rock Creek and Sand Canyon) consists of 5,243 acres with elevations ranging from 7,000 to 10,000 feet. It is contiguous with the John Muir Wilderness along the eastern and southern boundaries. It is located along the east side of the Rock Creek Recreation Area and in the vicinity of Swall Meadows (private community located to the east). It is oddly shaped, like a horseshoe, as it follows the existing wilderness boundary. The polygon intersects with a small portion of the Rock Creek West and Wheeler Ridge Inventoried Roadless Areas, south of Swall Meadows. Ecosystem types include mountain mahogany, pinyon-juniper, sagebrush, and subalpine forest. The northern and eastern portion of the area is within the wildland-urban interface. The area is along the eastern escarpment of Wheeler Crest and has steep slopes. At lower elevations, open shrublands dominating the moraines contain scattered pockets of aspen that add to the diversity of the landscape. Perennial stream channels include Rock Creek and Birch Creek. There are intermittent stream channels from Wheeler Ridge.

National Vegetation Classification System data indicates 10 percent of the polygon (537 acres) consists of two ecological groups, Inter-Mountain Basin big sagebrush shrubland, and Great Basin foothill and lower montane riparian woodland and shrubland, which have less than 10 percent of its national extent protected in the National Wilderness Preservation System. An additional 2,100 acres consists of Great Basin pinyon-juniper woodland and Rocky Mountain aspen forest and woodland, which have less than 15 percent of their national extent protected in the National Wilderness Preservation System.

### **Wilderness Characteristics**

#### *Degree the Area Generally Appears to be Affected Primarily by the Forces of Nature*

There is a special use permit issued to Rock Creek Lake Resort for a small Federal Energy Regulatory Commission hydro project. No cultural resources are known, but archaeological remains and ruins associated with historic and prehistoric occupation and use are likely to exist. Public comments indicate there are trails used by mountain bikers in the Sand Canyon area.

The polygon has moderate to high ecological integrity. The area is partially within the 2002 Birch Fire Area. It is unknown if there are invasive plant species in the area, but cheatgrass may be present. The area includes introduced trout, maintained by fish stocking, but also self-reproducing. There are reduced frog populations due to trout. Stocked fish do not allow for connectivity of isolated frog populations. Aquatic ecological composition has been altered by humans. There are likely legacy grazing impacts as well as impacts to soils from the Birch Fire in the northern portion of the polygon. Soils are likely fully recovered. Soils are in desired condition in the rest of the area. Part of Ainslee Meadow is in this polygon, but the condition is unknown. There is riparian vegetation associated with a high ground water table and in canyons, but the condition is unknown.

#### *Opportunities for Solitude or Primitive and Unconfined Recreation*

The topography has steep slopes with mostly open forests, so screening is limited. The area is located in the vicinity of a concentrated recreation area (Rock Creek), which has campgrounds, trailheads and picnic areas, and resorts. There is private property and homes east of area. The Wheeler Ridge four wheel drive trail runs the length of the polygon along the eastern boundary. In addition, the area is located in the vicinity of the communities of Swall Meadows and Paradise, as well old Highway 395 (east of the area). The proximity to communities, concentrated

recreation area and motorized trails limits the opportunities for solitude. The area receives year round recreation use, with higher use during the summer months focused around the developed recreation facilities in Rock Creek, as well as Wheeler four wheel drive trail, mountain biking in Sand Canyon and climbing activity on granite crags. During the winter months, there is some cross-country skiing that occurs, including recreation use associated with Rock Creek Resort, which is open year round.

#### *Other Features of Value*

Within the polygon there may be rare spring snails in spring habitat and Sierra Nevada Bighorn Sheep. It also contains water birch (riparian community tracked by California Fish and Wildlife). There are views of Owens Valley, Volcanic Table lands and White Mountains.

#### **Manageability**

The area is contiguous with existing wilderness, the John Muir Wilderness, and is in proximity to a concentrated recreation area with developed facilities (campgrounds, hiking trails and trailheads, and resorts), motorized trails, and communities. The existing wilderness boundary was drawn to exclude these features. The area contains habitat for listed species, including Sierra Nevada yellow-legged frog, Yosemite Toad, and Sierra Nevada bighorn sheep, which may require active management under the Endangered Species Act. There is one water right in the area. There is small Federal Energy Regulatory Commission hydro project that is under special use permit with Rock Creek Resort.

#### **Summary of Potential Suitability for Inclusion in the National Wilderness Preservation System**

There fish stocking in the area. Few developments were noted within the area. There may be a Federal Energy Regulatory Commission licensed facility under special use permit with Rock Creek Resort in the area, and the polygon is in proximity to developments such as recreation facilities. The area is believed to have moderate to high ecological integrity, although natural quality has been affected by fish stocking, which has altered native aquatic assemblages. This polygon presents a limited opportunity to protect ecological groups that may be minimally represented in the National Wilderness Preservation System. Ecological groups with less than 10 percent of their national extent in the National Wilderness Preservation System comprise 537 acres. Ecological groups with less than 15 percent of their national extent in the National Wilderness Preservation System comprise an additional 2,100 acres. The opportunity for solitude is degraded due to the proximity to concentrated recreation use, nearby residential communities, roads and motorized trail system and visibility to Highway 395. There is opportunity for primitive and unconfined recreation. The proximity to concentrated recreation use and facilities, roads and motorized trails, as well as the adjacent private land parcels would make it difficult to manage for wilderness characteristics. The location of the roads, motorized trails, and forest boundary do not allow the polygon to be reshaped in a way that would make it more manageable. The existing wilderness boundary is currently drawn to exclude these features. (For map see Exhibit A – Inyo National Forest Evaluation Maps – Evaluation Map D.)

### **Polygon 1155 (Rock Creek West)**

#### **General Description**

Polygon 1155 (Rock Creek West) consists of 3,498 acres ranging in elevation from 7,600 to 9,600 feet. It is contiguous with the John Muir Wilderness along the western and southern boundaries and is located along the west side of the Rock Creek Recreation Area and in the vicinity of Aspen

Springs and Toms Place (private communities located to the north). The polygon is elongated and narrow, between Rock Creek Road and the wilderness boundary. It intersects with the Rock Creek West Inventoried Roadless Area. Ecosystem types include alpine, Jeffrey pine, pinyon-juniper, and subalpine forest. The lower portion (northern) of the area is within the wildland-urban interface. The area includes steep slopes above Rock Creek Canyon. It is mostly open forests, with some areas with pinyon pine and mixed conifer forests.

National Vegetation Classification System data indicates 3 percent of the polygon (112 acres) consists of two ecological groups, Inter-Mountain Basin big sagebrush shrubland, and Great Basin foothill and lower montane riparian woodland and shrubland, which have less than 10 percent of its national extent protected in the National Wilderness Preservation System. An additional 1,100 acres consists of Great Basin pinyon-juniper woodland and Rocky Mountain aspen forest and woodland, which have less than 15 percent of their national extent protected in the National Wilderness Preservation System.

### Wilderness Characteristics

#### *Degree the Area Generally Appears to be Affected Primarily by the Forces of Nature*

The area is largely unsurveyed for cultural resources, but it contains prehistoric and historic sites including prehistoric lithic scatter and a multicomponent site with lithics, historic refuse, and a partially dismantled log cabin.

The polygon has moderate to high ecological integrity. No invasive plants species are documented. There are introduced trout, maintained by fish stocking, but also self-reproducing. The area has reduced frog populations due to trout. Stocked fish do not allow for connectivity of isolated frog populations. Aquatic ecological composition has been altered by humans. The area is located adjacent to a residential community which has led to habituation of wildlife, such as black bears. There are unnamed perennial channels throughout this area, as well as numerous intermittent channels. The condition of riparian areas and meadows is unknown. There is high recreation use in this area, and there are likely user trails and dispersed camping that potentially impact soil conditions. These would be highly localized impacts, and it is expected that most of the area is likely in desired condition. The air quality is excellent.

#### *Opportunities for Solitude or Primitive and Unconfined Recreation*

The topography has steep slopes above Rock Creek Canyon, with visibility to recreation activities and development. There are some areas with pinyon pine and mixed conifer, but mostly open forests, so screening is limited. The area is located in the vicinity of a concentrated recreation area (Rock Creek), which has a paved forest highway, campgrounds, trailheads and picnic areas, a pack station and resorts along the eastern boundary. The northern boundary borders private communities in Little Round Valley, including Aspen Springs and Toms Place. Highway 395 is also in the vicinity of the northern boundary. Sounds from vehicles, campgrounds and other developed recreation features, highways and communities would be present in most locations in the area. The area receives year round recreation use, with higher use during the summer months focused around the developed recreation facilities in Rock Creek. During the winter months, there is some cross-country skiing that occurs, including recreation use associated with Rock Creek Resort, which is open year round. The lower portion of Rock Creek Road to the Sno-Park is plowed in winter. Potential for encounters with other visitors is high, particularly during the summer months. There is opportunity for primitive and unconfined recreation.

### *Other Features of Value*

The area may be Yosemite toad habitat. The entire area has outstanding views of high peaks in Rock Creek and many lakes, as well as outstanding examples of glacial moraines and large Sierra junipers.

### **Manageability**

The polygon is an elongated, narrow strip that mostly parallels Rock Creek Road (paved forest highway) along the eastern boundary. The western and southern boundary is contiguous with the John Muir Wilderness. The polygon is in proximity to a concentrated recreation area with developed facilities (campgrounds, hiking trails and trailheads and resorts), residential communities, and a paved forest road and Highway 395. The area contains habitat for listed species, including Sierra Nevada yellow-legged frog, Yosemite toad, and Sierra Nevada bighorn sheep, which may require active management under the Endangered Species Act. There are nine water rights in the area.

### **Summary of Potential Suitability for Inclusion in the National Wilderness Preservation System**

Very few developments were noted within the area. The polygon is in proximity to developments such as recreation facilities. The area is believed to have moderate to high ecological integrity, although the natural quality has been affected by fish stocking that altered native aquatic assemblages. This polygon presents a limited opportunity to protect ecological groups that may be minimally represented in the National Wilderness Preservation System. Ecological groups with less than 10 percent of their national extent in the National Wilderness Preservation System comprise 112 acres. Ecological groups with less than 15 percent of their national extent in the National Wilderness Preservation System comprise an additional 1,100 acres. The opportunity for solitude is degraded due to the proximity to concentrated recreation use, nearby residential communities, roads and highways. There is opportunity for primitive and unconfined recreation. The proximity to concentrated recreation use and facilities, roads and motorized trails, as well as the adjacent private land parcels would make it difficult to manage for wilderness characteristics. The location of the roads, developments and the forest boundary do not allow the polygon to be reshaped in a way that would make it more manageable. The existing wilderness boundary is currently drawn to exclude these features. (For map see Exhibit A – Inyo National Forest Evaluation Maps – Evaluation Map D.)

## **Polygon 1156 (McGee Creek)**

### **General Description**

Polygon 1156 (McGee Creek) consists of 5,129 acres with elevations ranging from 7,400 to over 10,500 feet. It is contiguous with the John Muir Wilderness along the southern boundary and is located southwest of Crowley Lake and Highway 395, extending north and west of McGee Creek and south of Lower Hilton Lakes Trailhead. It includes McGee Mountain at 10,871 feet in elevation. The polygon is oddly shaped and almost divided in three parts by roads that protrude into the area. The majority of polygon intersects with Nevahbe Ridge, Laurel McGee and Whisky Creek Inventoried Roadless Areas. Ecosystem types include mountain mahogany, pinyon-juniper, sagebrush, and subalpine forest. It contains Sierra Nevada bighorn sheep designated critical habitat. The area is mostly steep open slopes along McGee Mountain above the low-angled alluvial run-out toward Crowley Lake. There are open shrublands and forests. The area contains perennial stream channels such as Hilton Creek, McGee Creek and Whisky Creek.

National Vegetation Classification System data indicates 24 percent of the polygon (1,236 acres) consists of two ecological groups, Inter-Mountain Basin big sagebrush shrubland, and Great Basin foothill and lower montane riparian woodland and shrubland, which have less than 10 percent of its national extent protected in the National Wilderness Preservation System. An additional 1,700 acres consists of Great Basin pinyon-juniper woodland and Rocky Mountain aspen forest and woodland, which have less than 15 percent of their national extent protected in the National Wilderness Preservation System.

## Wilderness Characteristics

### *Degree the Area Generally Appears to be Affected Primarily by the Forces of Nature*

There is a county television translator installation near McGee Mountain with infrequent access using the Tobacco Flat Road. The area includes historic foundations and trash scatter and remains of ski site and rope tows. The McGee Mountain Ski Tow Site consists of the remains of three rope tows, including fallen poles with pulleys and rope guards attached, rope remnants (one rope along the route of the tow), and remains of tows or platform where tow was located at the top of the three routes. Wooden remains from the structures built to house the tow motors are located at the tops of Rope Tow 1 and 2. A warming hut building was constructed at the ski operation in the 1940s, and was demolished by the Forest Service in the 1980s. There may have been some historic mining activity, but not noticeable.

The polygon has moderate ecological integrity. Invasive plant species occur in the area (cheatgrass is expanding). Sheep grazed the area up until five years ago. The allotments are now closed. The area is located adjacent to a residential community which has led to habituation of wildlife, such as black bears. There are introduced trout, maintained by fish stocking, but also self-reproducing. There are reduced frog populations due to trout. Stocked fish do not allow for connectivity of isolated frog populations. Fish are most likely self-sustaining, but are influenced by stocked fish downstream. The aquatic ecological composition has been altered by humans. There are perennial stream channels such as McGee, Hilton and Whisky Creeks. Hilton Creek is on the 303d state list of impaired or threatened streams for dissolved oxygen. No mapped meadows are present. Riparian vegetation associated with perennial channels and canyons is in unknown condition. There is high recreation use in this area, and there are likely user trails and dispersed camping that potentially impact soil conditions. Legacy grazing and recreation impacts, such as the old rope tow and dispersed camping, potentially impact soil conditions. These would be highly localized impacts, and it is expected that the rest of area is likely in desired condition. The air quality is excellent.

### *Opportunities for Solitude or Primitive and Unconfined Recreation*

The topography of this polygon has mostly steep, open slopes along McGee Mountain above low-angled alluvial run-out toward Crowley Lake, with visibility to recreation activities, development, and roads and highways. It includes open forests and shrublands, so screening is limited. There are many developments in the vicinity of the area, including campgrounds and trailheads (Bureau of Land Management and Forest Service), and old Highway 395 and current Highway 395 just northeast of area. There is a four wheel drive road along the northwest boundary. A paved forest highway in McGee Creek, which provides access to a pack station and trailhead, is cherry-stemmed into the area nearly splitting it in half. Noise from these developments would be present from most locations in the area. The potential for encounters with other visitors is high, particularly in the lower and eastern sides. There is a lower potential for encounters on McGee Mountain. The area has higher use during the summer, but it is also popular for winter motorized recreation in the winter. There is a heli-ski competition that has been authorized under special use

permit on McGee Mountain. There is a hang gliding launch in the McGee Mountain area (Road 4S47), and there is some mountain bike use on routes along the eastern side of area. The area likely provides opportunities for primitive-type recreation activities, including cross-country hiking, cross-country skiing, and general forest exploration with some degree of challenge.

#### *Other Features of Value*

The area is a sage grouse habitat and a Sierra Nevada bighorn sheep designated critical habitat. It contains water birch (riparian community tracked by California Fish and Wildlife) and views of Crowley Basin.

#### **Manageability**

The polygon is oddly shaped and mostly parallels Highway 395 along the northeastern boundary and the existing wilderness boundary along the southern edge. There are roads that protrude into the polygon, nearly splitting the area into three sections. The polygon is in proximity to recreation developments and activities, residential communities, roads and highways. Existing uses that occur in the area include motorized winter recreation, mountain biking, pack station authorized pastures and nonwilderness day rides, hang gliding launch near McGee Mountain, and a heli-ski competition that has been authorized under special use permit. There is also a county television translator installation near McGee Mountain under special use permit. The area is currently within the wildland-urban interface. The area contains habitat for listed species, including Sierra Nevada bighorn sheep which may require active management under the Endangered Species Act. The area also contains priority habitat for sage grouse. There are three water rights in the area.

#### **Summary of Potential Suitability for Inclusion in the National Wilderness Preservation System**

Developments noted within the area include an old rope tow/ski area and a county translator installation near McGee Mountain. The polygon is in proximity to developments, such as recreation facilities (campgrounds, trailheads, and pack station), private land communities, roads and highways. The area is believed to have moderate ecological integrity. This polygon presents a limited opportunity to protect ecological groups that may be minimally represented in the National Wilderness Preservation System. Ecological groups with less than 10 percent of their national extent in the National Wilderness Preservation System comprise 1,236 acres. Ecological groups with less than 15 percent of their national extent in the National Wilderness Preservation System comprise an additional 1,700 acres. There are some invasive plant species (cheatgrass is expanding) in the area and fish stocking has altered native aquatic assemblages. The opportunity for solitude is degraded due to the proximity to concentrated recreation use, nearby residential communities, roads and highways. There is opportunity for primitive and unconfined recreation, although existing uses include motorized winter recreation and mountain biking. The proximity to concentrated recreation use and facilities, roads and motorized trails, as well as the adjacent private land parcels would make it difficult to manage for wilderness characteristics. The location of the roads, developments, and the forest boundary do not allow the polygon to be reshaped in a way that would make it more manageable. (For map see Exhibit A – Inyo National Forest Evaluation Maps – Evaluation Map D.)

## **Polygon 1159 (Mammoth Escarpment–Lakes Basin, Sherwin Creek, Laurel Creek and Convict Lake)**

### **General Description**

Polygon 1159 (Mammoth Escarpment-Lakes Basin, Sherwin Creek, Laurel Creek and Convict Lake) consists of 14,833 acres with elevations ranging from 7,500 to over 10,000 feet. It is contiguous with the John Muir Wilderness along the western and southern boundaries and is located along the Sierra Nevada escarpment southwest of Mammoth Lakes to southeast of Convict Lake. It includes the Lakes Basin, Sherwin Lakes, Laurel Lakes and Convict Lake. The majority of the polygon intersects with the Laurel McGee, San Joaquin and Sherwin Inventoried Roadless Areas. Ecosystem types include alpine, Jeffrey pine, mountain mahogany, pinyon-juniper, red fir, sagebrush and subalpine forest. It includes Sierra Nevada bighorn sheep designated critical habitat and sage grouse priority habitat. The Mammoth Escarpment rises from gentle slopes of sagebrush-bitterbrush to very steep, often precipitous terrain. At lower elevations, open shrublands dominating the moraines contain scattered pockets of aspen that add to the diversity of the landscape.

The polygon includes four distinct geographic locations. The Lakes Basin (western portion of the polygon) is in the vicinity of a concentrated recreation area with substantial developments (campgrounds, trailheads and hiking trails, paved bike trails, boat ramps, resorts, pack stations, and recreation residences). In 2010, a community-driven collaborative planning effort was completed for the Lakes Basin, called the Lakes Basin Special Study (LABSS). The LABSS provided recommendations for potential additional recreation development including expanding the multi-use path that runs through the Basin. The Sherwin Creek area (western half of the polygon, east of Lakes Basin), located south of the Town of Mammoth Lakes, has fewer recreation developments (campground, trailhead and hiking trail, organization camps) and less concentrated recreation use. In 2010, a community-based collaborative planning effort produced the Sherwins Area Recreation Plan. The document identified the potential for trail enhancement and development in the Sherwins Area to include additional motorized access, mountain-bike trails, equestrian and hiking trails, including multi-use paths. The Laurel Lakes area on the eastern half of the polygon, between Sherwin Creek is less developed, with the recreation use focused on the motorized trail that provides access to Laurel Lakes, which is popular for dispersed camping. The Convict Lake area (eastern portion of the polygon) is in proximity to a concentrated recreation area with developments (campground, trailhead and hiking trail, resort and boat ramp).

National Vegetation Classification System data indicates 11 percent of the polygon (1,664 acres) consists of ecological groups that have less than 10 percent of its national extent protected in the National Wilderness Preservation System. The most prevalent group is Inter-Mountain Basin big sagebrush shrubland. An additional 2,200 acres consists of Great Basin pinyon-juniper woodland and Rocky Mountain aspen forest and woodland, which have less than 15 percent of their national extent protected in the National Wilderness Preservation System.

### **Wilderness Characteristics**

#### *Degree the Area Generally Appears to be Affected Primarily by the Forces of Nature*

Within this polygon there is a departure from the natural fire regime, due to fire suppression in some areas, particularly in areas in close proximity to communities, recreation developments, and domestic water supply infrastructure for the Town of Mammoth Lakes. Past vegetation management near the boundary of the area (western portion of the polygon) includes hazard tree

removal along roads and in developed recreation sites, treatments to reduce dwarf mistletoe infestations, and blowdown salvage to reduce hazardous fuels. Additional fuels reduction work is currently being planned to enhance wildfire defensible space around developments and to create a strategic fuel break near Mammoth Pass (within the area). Grazing occurs in the lower elevations (two cattle allotments) and there is fish stocking in the area.

There are fences, pipelines, and troughs in the area. There is a Los Angeles Department of Water and Power Snow Survey Course with associated improvements in the Mammoth Pass area. There are United States Geological Survey installations in the Laurel Pond and Mammoth Pass areas. There is evidence of historic mining activity, including old railroad cars, buildings, adits, roads, trails, tailing piles, and other associated debris (Monte Cristo Mine with three rail cars and other debris, and Mammoth Mine 3). About a quarter of the area has been surveyed for cultural resources, but there are roughly 40 documented cultural resource sites including primarily prehistoric sites with lithic scatters and isolated artifacts, as well as an extensive prehistoric village site. Historic sites include a historic dump and ruins associated with historic mining activity. Public comments indicate there is a network of front-country trails used by mountain bikers in this area including: Mammoth Rock, Laurel Canyon and trails in the Lakes Basin.

This polygon has moderate ecological integrity. It is mostly natural with some alteration from fire suppression, grazing, historic mining, historic logging and recreation. Grazing occurs in the lower elevations (two cattle allotments in the area). Within the Lakes Basin, there are a variety of invasive plant species present, and they are stable to increasing. There are very few invasive plant species (stable trend) in the other areas. There are introduced trout, maintained by fish stocking, but also self-reproducing. Frog populations have been reduced due to trout. Stocked fish do not allow for connectivity of isolated frog populations. The aquatic ecological composition has been altered by humans. There is the potential for invasive salamanders in the western portion of the polygon. The major paved roads and highly developed sites in a portion of the area have led to fragmented habitat and habituation of wildlife such as bears and small mammals. Other portions of the polygon are less impacted by developed areas and roads.

There are many perennial streams in the area such as Mammoth Creek, Sherwin Creek, Laurel Creek and streams in the Lakes Basin between the lakes. Mammoth Creek is on the 303d state list of impaired or threatened water bodies for metals below this area. There are some intermittent stream channels. Several mapped meadows are present in the area, however their condition is unknown. There is riparian vegetation throughout the area, condition unknown. There may be some impacts from recreational grazing. There may be some localized impacts to soil conditions related to concentrated recreation use, legacy mining and grazing activities and historic logging. The air quality is nonattainment for Pm10 (Mammoth Pm10 planning area). Public comments indicate Solitude Canyon is an area with a diverse conifer forest.

### *Opportunities for Solitude or Primitive and Unconfined Recreation*

Topography is variable, but includes some steep slopes. There is some screening by trees, but mostly open views to Long Valley/Mammoth Lakes. Within the Lakes Basin, there is screening due to large trees. There are many developments in the vicinity of the area, including developed recreation facilities and concentrated recreation use, paved roads and highways (including Highway 395 just north of area in the eastern portion of the polygon), and the Town of Mammoth Lakes with homes and businesses prominent. There is a motorized trail, which accesses Laurel Lakes (four wheel drive experience and popular dispersed camping destination), which bisects the polygon from north to south, splitting it nearly in half. There is also a motorized trail that bisects the polygon near Convict Lake. Several paved forest highways (Lakes Basin and Convict Lake)

are cherry-stemmed into the area. Noise from these developments would be present from most locations in the area. Evidence of civilization can be seen and heard, including the Town of Mammoth Lakes, Mammoth Airport and Highway 395. The potential for encounters with other visitors is high. It is extremely high during summer months, especially adjacent to Mammoth Lakes Basin, Convict Lake, and system trails in Sherwin Creek. The area is also popular for winter recreation, including over snow vehicles, cross-country skiing and backcountry skiing. There is winter backcountry and over-snow vehicle use in the Sherwin Bowls area and at the base of the escarpment. Several public comments indicate Solitude Canyon as an area with opportunities for solitude.

### *Other Features of Value*

The area includes Yosemite toad, Sierra Nevada bighorn sheep designated critical habitat and sage grouse habitat. It also has Yuba Pass willow which is a sensitive species. The upper watershed supplies water for Town of Mammoth Lakes. The area's mixed carbonate and granitic geology create unique geologic and ecological diversity.

### **Manageability**

The polygon is oddly shaped and mostly parallels Highway 395 along the northeastern boundary, the Town of Mammoth Lakes along the northwestern boundary and the existing wilderness boundary along the southern edge. There are developed recreation facilities and roads that protrude into the polygon. The polygon is in proximity to recreation developments and activities, residential communities, and roads and highways. There is a private land inholding (Mammoth Consolidated Mine) on the western side of the polygon near the Lakes Basin, along Mammoth Creek. Existing uses within the area or in the vicinity include extensive recreation activities and development (campgrounds, system trails and trailheads, mountain biking, boating and fishing, resorts, pack stations, guided fishing, motorized trails, motorized winter recreation, dispersed camping, cross-country and backcountry skiing, organization camps), grazing, community water systems, and Forest Service water systems. With motorized uses (off highway vehicles and over snow vehicles) and mountain biking as popular activities in the area, it would be difficult to prevent motorized vehicle and mountain bike incursions. The area is currently within the wildland-urban interface. There are existing vegetation treatments and maintenance treatments, as well as planned treatments. The area contains habitat for listed species, including Yosemite toad, and Sierra Nevada bighorn sheep, which may require active management under the Endangered Species Act. The area contains sage grouse priority habitat. There are seventeen water rights in the area.

### **Summary of Potential Suitability for Inclusion in the National Wilderness Preservation System**

There are developments in the area that degrade the undeveloped quality, such as historic mining features, grazing improvements, a Los Angeles Department of Water and Power Snow Survey Course, and United States Geological Survey installations. The polygon is in proximity to substantial developments and improvements, such as recreation facilities (campgrounds, trailheads, resorts, boat ramps, pack station and recreation residences), private land communities, motorized trails, roads and highways. The area is believed to have moderate ecological integrity. This polygon presents a limited opportunity to protect ecological groups that may be minimally represented in the National Wilderness Preservation System. Ecological groups with less than 10 percent of their national extent in the National Wilderness Preservation System comprise 1,664 acres. Ecological groups with less than 15 percent of their national extent in the National Wilderness Preservation System comprise an additional 2,200 acres. There are some invasive

plant species in the area, fish stocking has altered native aquatic assemblages, and there are some localized soil impacts. The opportunity for solitude is degraded due to the proximity to concentrated recreation use, nearby residential communities and infrastructure (Mammoth Airport for example), motorized trails, roads and highways. There is opportunity for primitive and unconfined recreation, although existing uses include motorized winter recreation and mountain biking. The proximity to concentrated recreation use and facilities, roads and motorized trails, as well as the adjacent private land would make it difficult to manage for wilderness characteristics. In addition, existing nonconforming wilderness uses, such as winter motorized recreation and mountain biking occur in the area. The location of the roads, developments and the forest boundary do not allow the polygon to be reshaped in a way that would make it more manageable. (For map see Exhibit A – Inyo National Forest Evaluation Maps – Evaluation Map D.)

## **Polygon 1161 (Reds Meadow)**

### **General Description**

Polygon 1161 (Reds Meadow) consists of 1,656 acres ranging in elevation from 7,500 to 9,000 feet. It is contiguous with the John Muir Wilderness along the southern and eastern boundaries. It is located on the back side of Mammoth Mountain Ski Area, west of the Town of Mammoth Lakes. This is a concentrated recreation area that includes developed campgrounds, trailheads, pack stations and access to Devils Postpile National Monument. It is a narrow and elongated polygon, which encompasses the narrow buffer left between areas of concentrated recreation use and development and areas of prior wilderness designation. The majority of the polygon intersects with the San Joaquin Inventoried Roadless Area. Ecosystem types include red fir and sagebrush. The Pacific Crest National Scenic Trail goes through the southwest corner of the polygon, near Rainbow Falls. U-shaped valleys, steep precipitous slopes, and basaltic outcrops characterize the area. This place is predominantly mid-elevation to high elevation red fir forest. It includes the headwaters of the Middle Fork of the San Joaquin River.

National Vegetation Classification System data indicates less than 1 percent of the polygon (4 acres) consists of ecological groups that have less than 10 percent of their national extent protected in the National Wilderness Preservation System.

### **Wilderness Characteristics**

#### *Degree the Area Generally Appears to be Affected Primarily by the Forces of Nature*

Within the polygon the vegetation composition and structure has been affected by modern fire suppression and recreation use and development. Past vegetation management includes: hazard tree removal along roads and in developed recreation sites; treatments to reduce dwarf mistletoe infestations; blowdown salvage to reduce hazardous fuels; additional fuels reduction work currently being planned to enhance wildfire defensible space around developments and to create a fuel break along the narrow, one way in and out access road. There is fish stocking in the area.

Approximately half of the area was surveyed for cultural resources, but there are nine documented cultural resource sites including prehistoric lithic scatters, historic trash scatters, the Red Meadow Ranger Station, and the Rainbow Falls toilet. Public comments indicate there are trails in the area used by mountain bikers.

This polygon has moderate ecological integrity. There is moderate to high human impact on plant communities. A few invasive plant species, including some cheatgrass (not abundant and stable) are found in the area. Vegetation composition and structure has been affected by modern fire suppression and recreation use and development. There are introduced trout, maintained by fish

stocking, but also self-reproducing. Frog populations have been reduced due to trout. Stocked fish do not allow for connectivity of isolated frog populations. The aquatic ecological composition has been altered by humans. This polygon includes developed campgrounds and trailheads, and is adjacent to a major paved road. These sites have led to some habitat fragmentation and habituation of wildlife such as bears and small mammals.

#### *Opportunities for Solitude or Primitive and Unconfined Recreation*

The area's topography is valley with surrounding slopes. There is some screening from mid-elevation red fir forest. This area is the narrow buffer left between areas of concentrated recreation use and developments, and areas of designated wilderness. There are many developments in the vicinity of the area, including campgrounds, day use sites and trailheads, resorts, pack stations, paved road, and a National Park Service ranger station with employee housing. Noise from these developments would be present from most locations in the area, and the Reds Meadow Valley may see nearly 2,000 visitors per day during the peak summer season, which limits the opportunity for solitude in the area. The potential for encounters with other visitors is high, particularly during the summer months. The road is seasonally closed and infrequently used by snowmobiles during the winter months.

#### *Other Features of Value*

The polygon includes a northern goshawk breeding area. It has the rare plant Robbins pondweed and the sensitive plant short-leaved hulsea. There are outstanding features generally located immediately adjacent to, but not within the area, already protected by other special designations (Minaret Falls in Ansel Adams Wilderness; columnar basalt formations in the Devils Postpile National Monument).

#### **Manageability**

The polygon is an elongated, narrow strip that mostly parallels Reds Meadow Road (paved forest road). The western boundary is contiguous with Devils Postpile National Monument, which has campgrounds and day use facilities, as well as a National Park Service ranger station and employee housing. The south and eastern boundary is contiguous with the existing the Ansel Adams Wilderness. The polygon is in proximity to a concentrated recreation area with developed facilities and a paved forest road. The existing wilderness boundary as currently drawn excludes these features. The area is currently within the wildland-urban interface. Fuels reduction work is currently being planned to enhance wildfire defensible space around developments and to create a fuel break along the narrow, one way in and out access road.

#### **Summary of Potential Suitability for Inclusion in the National Wilderness Preservation System**

Fire suppression, fuels reduction and vegetation management treatments, grazing, and fish stocking degrade the wilderness characteristics. The few developments noted within the area are historic sites, such as Reds Meadow Ranger Station. The polygon is in proximity to developments, such as recreation facilities (campgrounds, trailheads, pack stations and resort) and paved forest road. The area is believed to have moderate ecological integrity. This polygon does not present an opportunity to protect ecological groups that may be minimally represented in the National Wilderness Preservation System. Ecological groups with less than 10 percent of their national extent in the National Wilderness Preservation System comprise a low number of acres. There are few invasive plant species (some cheatgrass, but stable) in the area and fish stocking has altered native aquatic assemblages. The opportunity for solitude is degraded due to the proximity to concentrated recreation use and paved forest road and highways. The opportunity for

primitive and unconfined recreation is limited due the proximity to concentrated recreation use and developments. The proximity to concentrated recreation use and facilities and paved forest road would make it difficult to manage for wilderness characteristics. In addition, existing nonconforming uses, such as winter motorized recreation and mountain biking occur in the area. The location of the road, developments, and the forest boundary do not allow the polygon to be reshaped in a way that would make it more manageable. (For map see Exhibit A – Inyo National Forest Evaluation Maps – Evaluation Map D.)

## **Polygon 1164 (Minaret Vista and San Joaquin Four Wheel Drive Trail)**

### **General Description**

Polygon 1164 (Minaret Vista and San Joaquin Four Wheel Drive Trail) consists of 1,017 acres ranging in elevation from 8,800 to 10,000 feet. It is contiguous with the Ansel Adams Wilderness along the northern and eastern boundaries. It is located to the northwest of the Mammoth Mountain Ski Area west of the Town of Mammoth Lakes, and northeast of Reds Meadow Road. It is an oddly shaped polygon since it follows the Reds Meadow Road and existing wilderness boundary. It is a narrow and elongated polygon encompassing the narrow buffer left between areas of concentrated recreation use and development and areas of prior wilderness designation. The majority of the polygon intersects with the San Joaquin Inventoried Roadless Area. Ecosystem types include red fir and subalpine forest.

National Vegetation Classification System data indicates none of the polygon consists of ecological groups that have less than 10 percent of their national extent protected in the National Wilderness Preservation System.

### **Wilderness Characteristics**

#### *Degree the Area Generally Appears to be Affected Primarily by the Forces of Nature*

The polygon has moderate ecological integrity. There is moderate to high human impact on plant communities. There are few invasive plant species, including some cheatgrass (not abundant and stable). Vegetation composition and structure has been affected by modern fire suppression and recreation use and development. The area is adjacent to a major paved road and some developed sites have fragmented habitat, causing wildlife to have to cross the road leading to some mortality. Developed sites have led to habituation of small mammals. Public comments indicate there are trails used by mountain bikers in this area.

#### *Opportunities for Solitude or Primitive and Unconfined Recreation*

This area is the narrow buffer left between Reds Meadow Road, areas of concentrated recreation use and developments (Minaret Vista and Reds Meadow Information Station), motorized trails (San Joaquin four wheel drive trail) and areas of designated wilderness. Mammoth Mountain Ski Area is in the vicinity. Noise from these developments would be present from most locations in the area. The opportunity for primitive and unconfined recreation is limited due the proximity to concentrated recreation use and developments.

#### *Other Features of Value*

None were noted.

## Manageability

The polygon is an elongated, narrow strip that mostly parallels Reds Meadow Road (paved forest road) and includes San Joaquin Four Wheel Drive Trail. The northern boundary is contiguous with existing wilderness (Ansel Adams Wilderness). The polygon is in proximity to a paved forest road, motorized trail within the polygon, and concentrated recreation area with developed facilities. The existing wilderness boundary as currently drawn excludes these features. The area is currently within a wildland-urban interface and there are needs for wildfire defensible space around developments and to create a fuel break along the narrow, one way in and out access road.

## Summary of Potential Suitability for Inclusion in the National Wilderness Preservation System

The wilderness characteristics have been degraded by fire suppression. There were no developments noted within the area. The polygon is in proximity to developments, such as recreation facilities and paved forest road. The area is believed to have moderate ecological integrity. This polygon does not present an opportunity to protect ecological groups that may be minimally represented in the National Wilderness Preservation System. There are no ecological groups with less than 10 percent of their national extent in the National Wilderness Preservation System in the area. The opportunity for solitude is degraded due to the proximity to concentrated recreation use, the paved forest road and motorized trails. The opportunity for primitive and unconfined recreation is limited due the proximity to concentrated recreation use and developments. The proximity to concentrated recreation use and facilities and paved forest road would make it difficult to manage for wilderness characteristics. In addition, existing nonconforming uses, such as winter motorized recreation and mountain biking occur in the area. The location of the road, developments and the forest boundary do not allow the polygon to be reshaped in a way that would make it more manageable. (For map see Exhibit A – Inyo National Forest Evaluation Maps – Evaluation Map D.)

## **Polygon 1179 (Lower Lee Vining Canyon to June Lake Loop)**

### General Description

Polygon 1179 (Lower Lee Vining Canyon to June Lake Loop) consists of 7,212 acres ranging in elevation from 7,600 to 9,000 feet. It is contiguous with the Ansel Adams Wilderness along the western boundary and is located along the Sierra Nevada escarpment from Lower Lee Vining Canyon to Silver Lake (June Lake Loop). The polygon is oddly shaped (elongated vertically from north to south) as it follows the existing wilderness boundary along the western edge and roads and private land parcels protrude into the polygon along the eastern edge. The north half of the polygon intersects with the Horse Meadow Inventory Roadless Area. Ecosystem types include Jeffrey pine, mountain mahogany, pinyon-juniper, red fir, sagebrush, subalpine forest and white fir. It is designated critical habitat for Sierra Nevada bighorn sheep. It includes highly diverse conifer forests and aspen. There are numerous perennial stream channels, such as Walker Creek, Gibbs Creek and Parker Creek.

National Vegetation Classification System data indicates 10 percent of the polygon (734 acres) consists of ecological groups that have less than 10 percent of their national extent protected in the National Wilderness Preservation System. Approximately 3,000 acres additional acres are comprised of Great Basin pinyon-juniper woodland and Rocky Mountain aspen forest and woodland, which have less than 15 percent of their national extent protected in the National Wilderness Preservation System.

## Wilderness Characteristics

### *Degree the Area Generally Appears to be Affected Primarily by the Forces of Nature*

The area has fish stocking (current and historic) as well as fish barriers to keep trout out of frog habitat. Fuels reduction projects are being implemented (understory thinning). The area includes habitat improvement for Sierra Nevada bighorn sheep and sage grouse. There are aspen enhancement projects within the area. There are no open allotments in this area, although there was grazing by sheep in the past.

Fish barriers are necessary to prevent introduced trout from invading frog habitat in upper reaches. These fish barriers may need to be mechanically maintained. There may be trailheads in the area. There are potentially some Los Angeles Department of Water and Power structures. Walker Lake Dam is in the area.

This polygon has high ecological integrity. The mixed conifer forest in the western portion of the polygon includes limber pines in Bloody Canyon. There is some departure of fire from its range of natural variability. There has been minimal human impact to the plant community. The area is very diverse, with low invasive plant species. Some cheatgrass is present and probably increasing. There are no open range allotments in this area, although there was grazing by sheep in the past. Historic and current stocking have altered aquatic assemblages. Stocked trout reside in most of the perennial streams, displacing native invertebrates. Walker Lake is an important fishery for Kamloops. Fish barriers are necessary to prevent introduced trout from invading frog habitat in upper reaches and may need to be mechanically maintained. This area does provide contiguous habitat and connectivity for wildlife, since developments only account for a small portion of the polygon. Public comments indicate an isolated population of southern alligator lizards exists along the Parker Bench trail, and there are goshawk and peregrine falcon nests known to be in the area. There are numerous perennial stream channels such as Walker Creek, Gibbs Creek and Parker Creek. Riparian vegetation is present on perennial channels and other canyons, condition unknown. Numerous meadows are present, but their condition is unknown. The soil quality is likely at the desired condition and air quality is excellent.

### *Opportunities for Solitude or Primitive and Unconfined Recreation*

The topography is steep, with many streams or drainages. Screening is minimal in some areas, but there is good screening from topography along the western side of the polygon. This area is the narrow buffer left between areas of concentrated recreation use, private land and areas of designated wilderness. There are developed recreation facilities in Lee Vining Canyon and June Lake Loop. The southern portion of the polygon is located immediately adjacent to Highway 158 (June Lake Loop), and the northern portion is located immediately adjacent to Highway 120. The proximity to concentrated recreation use and highways limits the opportunity for solitude. There may be opportunities for primitive-type recreation activities, including cross-country hiking and general forest exploration.

### *Other Features of Value*

Walker Lake is an important fishery for Kamloops. Springs may contain spring snails. The area is a Sierra Nevada bighorn sheep designated critical habitat and houses the rare plant, Robbins pondweed. There are views of Mono Basin and Mono Craters.

## Manageability

The polygon is elongated vertically from north to south as it follows the existing wilderness boundary along the western edge and roads and private land parcels protrude into the polygon

along the eastern edge, making for an irregularly shaped boundary. The polygon is in proximity to concentrated recreation use and facilities, and highways in the south and north portions of the area. The northern perimeter and southern perimeter overlap with a wildland-urban interface that surrounds recreation developments in Lee Vining Canyon and along the north shore of Silver Lake. The area overlaps a wildland-urban interface and there are needs for wildfire defensible space around developments and access roads. The area contains designated critical habitat for Sierra Nevada bighorn sheep, which may require active management under the Endangered Species Act. Fish barriers that need to be mechanically maintained are necessary to prevent introduced trout from invading frog (federally listed frog species) habitat in upper reaches. There is existing nonwilderness outfitting and guiding (pack station). The Los Angeles Department of Water and Power manages lands adjacent to the boundary. Motorized winter recreation is an existing use. There are five water rights in the area.

### **Summary of Potential Suitability for Inclusion in the National Wilderness Preservation System**

The wilderness characteristics are affected by fish stocking, fuels reduction activities and habitat improvement projects. There were some developments noted within the area, including Walker Lake Dam, fish barriers and possibly Los Angeles Department of Water and Power infrastructure. The polygon is in proximity to developments, such as recreation facilities, residences and highways. The area is believed to have high ecological integrity. This polygon presents a limited opportunity to protect ecological groups that may be minimally represented in the National Wilderness Preservation System. Ecological groups with less than 10 percent of their national extent in the National Wilderness Preservation System comprise 734 acres. Ecological groups with less than 15 percent of their national extent in the National Wilderness Preservation System comprise an additional 3,000 acres. The opportunity for solitude is degraded due to the proximity to concentrated recreation use and highways. There may be opportunity for primitive and unconfined recreation. The proximity to concentrated recreation use and facilities and highways would make it difficult to manage for wilderness characteristics, particularly along the northern half and eastern side of the polygon. In addition, existing nonconforming uses, such as winter motorized recreation occurs in the area. (For map see Exhibit A – Inyo National Forest Evaluation Maps – Evaluation Map A.)

### **Polygon 1195 (West of Mono Lake and Highway 395, North of Lee Vining)**

#### **General Description**

Polygon 1195 (West of Mono Lake and Highway 395, North of Lee Vining) consists of 2,008 acres ranging in elevation from 7,000 to 9,600 feet. It is contiguous with the Ansel Adams Wilderness along the western boundary and is located along the Sierra Nevada escarpment between Lundy Canyon and Lee Vining, and between Highway 395 and the wilderness boundary. The polygon is oddly shaped (elongated vertically from north to south) as it follows the existing wilderness boundary along the western edge and private land parcels along the eastern edge. The eastern edge is within one mile of Highway 395. About half of the polygon intersects with Log Cabin Saddlebag Inventoried Roadless Area. Ecosystem types include mountain mahogany, pinyon-juniper, sagebrush, and subalpine forest. The area is within the Mono Basin National Forest Scenic Area. It includes steep terrain along the escarpment that overlooks the Mono Basin and Highway 395.

National Vegetation Classification System data indicates 21 percent of the polygon (414 acres) consists of ecological groups that have less than 10 percent of their national extent protected in the National Wilderness Preservation System. Approximately 1,000 additional acres are comprised of Great Basin pinyon-juniper woodland and Rocky Mountain aspen forest and woodland, which have less than 15 percent of their national extent protected in the National Wilderness Preservation System.

### Wilderness Characteristics

#### *Degree the Area Generally Appears to be Affected Primarily by the Forces of Nature*

There is fish stocking in the area, as well as fire suppression evidenced by pinyon pine expansion. The area includes avalanche control features for Highway 395. The area is largely unsurveyed for cultural resources but there is one known prehistoric lithic scatter site.. Public comments indicate there is an important connecting trail used by mountain bikers in the corridor between Mono Lake and the Hoover Wilderness. It is not certain, however, if the trail is located within the polygon boundary.

The polygon has moderate to high ecological integrity. There is some departure from fire occurring within its range of natural variability, as evidenced by pinyon pine expansion. It includes invasive plant species with cheatgrass probably increasing. Historic and current stocking altered aquatic assemblages. Stocked trout reside in most of the perennial streams, displacing native amphibians. There is no access for stocking small streams, but some waters may have residual fish populations from historic stocking. Historic fish stocking has altered native aquatic assemblages to a moderate degree. Dechambeau Creek is a perennial channel that occurs in the area. There are numerous ephemeral and intermittent channels that dissect this area. There is riparian vegetation along Dechambeau Creek and other intermittent channels, and the condition is unknown. There are no mapped meadows in the area. Soils are likely at the desired condition due to limited management activities in this area. This area is within the Mono Basin PM-10 nonattainment area for air quality.

#### *Opportunities for Solitude or Primitive and Unconfined Recreation*

Within this polygon, the topography is steep terrain along the escarpment that overlooks Highway 395 and Mono Lake. There is very little screening, but visibility is mostly Mono Lake. There are residential communities, such as Mono City that can be seen from the area. The proximity to the highway limits the opportunity for solitude as the highway can be seen and heard from much of the area. The steep terrain limits opportunity for primitive and unconfined recreation.

#### *Other Features of Value*

The area features great views of Mono Basin and across to the White Mountains. It contains unique meta-sedimentary rocks (“rooftop pendant”).

### Manageability

The polygon is elongated vertically from north to south as it follows the existing wilderness boundary along the western edge and Highway 395 along the eastern edge. The polygon is in proximity to the highway. The perimeter overlaps with the wildland-urban interface that surrounds recreation developments and private land inholdings. There is potential avalanche control infrastructure within the area.

## Summary of Potential Suitability for Inclusion in the National Wilderness Preservation System

Fish stocking and fire suppression affect the wilderness characteristics. There were a few developments noted within the area, including avalanche control infrastructure for Highway 395. The polygon is in close proximity to Highway 395, and there is visibility to residential communities and developments within the Mono Basin. The area is believed to have moderate to high ecological integrity. This polygon presents a limited opportunity to protect ecological groups that may be minimally represented in the National Wilderness Preservation System. Ecological groups with less than 10 percent of their national extent in the National Wilderness Preservation System comprise 414 acres. Ecological groups with less than 15 percent of their national extent in the National Wilderness Preservation System comprise an additional 1,000 acres. The opportunity for solitude is degraded due to the proximity to the highway and developments within the Mono Basin. The opportunity for primitive and unconfined recreation is limited due to steep terrain. The proximity to the highway would make it difficult to manage for wilderness characteristics. There is not an opportunity to reshape the polygon to make it more manageable. There are potentially avalanche control structures within the area, which would be inconsistent with wilderness. (For map see Exhibit A – Inyo National Forest Evaluation Maps – Evaluation Map A.)

### **Polygon 1208 (Saddlebag Lake)**

#### General Description

Polygon 1208 (Saddlebag Lake) consists of 2,516 acres ranging in elevation from 10,000 to 10,800 feet. It is contiguous with the Hoover Wilderness and is located north of Highway 120 and includes Saddlebag Lake. The polygon is oddly shaped (elongated from north to south) as it follows the existing wilderness boundary (which excludes the recreation developments) along the west, north and eastern edge. The southern edge is adjoins Highway 120, just outside the entrance to Yosemite National Park. The majority of the polygon intersects with Hall Natural Area and Log Cabin Saddlebag Inventoried Roadless Areas. Ecosystem types include alpine, mountain mahogany, red fir, and subalpine forest. There are perennial stream channels present including Lee Vining Creek, and numerous intermittent channels.

National Vegetation Classification System data indicates less than 1 percent of the polygon (25 acres) consists of ecological groups that have less than 10 percent of their national extent protected in the National Wilderness Preservation System.

#### Wilderness Characteristics

##### *Degree the Area Generally Appears to be Affected Primarily by the Forces of Nature*

Saddlebag Lake is a reservoir with a dam. There is a motorized ferry that operates during the summer months. The area is developed with campgrounds, trailheads and resorts. There is fish stocking in the area. Fish barriers are necessary to prevent introduced trout from invading frog habitat in upper reaches. These may need to be mechanically maintained. The Bennettville/Great Sierra Mine is located in the southern portion of the polygon and is likely substantially noticeable. The area is largely unsurveyed for cultural resources. In addition to the large mining center, the sites include the remains of a historic sawmill and a historic cabin on the north side of Saddlebag Lake. There is a developed spring for water on the east side of lake. It is unknown if it is still in use. There are several trails used by mountain bikers in the area around the lake.

The ecological integrity of area is moderate to high except for the area near Saddlebag Lake. Fire is probably occurring within its range of natural variability. Human impact to plant communities

is variable and depends on the location in polygon. Invasive species are unknown, but there are probably dandelions. Stocked trout reside in most of the perennial streams, displacing native invertebrates. There is active stocking with trucks and fish in streams from historic stocking. The historic fish stocking has altered native aquatic assemblages. Fish barriers are necessary to prevent introduced trout from invading frog habitat in upper reaches. These may need to be mechanically maintained. Habitat from toads has been disrupted due to heavy recreation use in area. This area does provide for connectivity, but disturbances from the presence of developed areas may limit the amount of movement for some wildlife species. The area has developed campgrounds, trailheads and resorts located throughout the area. This has led to some habitat fragmentation, disturbances and habituation of some wildlife species. There are perennial stream channels present including Lee Vining Creek, and numerous intermittent channels. They are in unknown condition. Numerous meadows are present, however their condition is unknown. There are user trails through meadows west of Saddlebag Lake, with unknown condition of riparian vegetation, but likely good. There are effects from upstream water manipulation. The air quality is excellent.

#### *Opportunities for Solitude or Primitive and Unconfined Recreation*

This area is the narrow buffer left between areas of concentrated recreation use and developments and areas of designated wilderness. There are many developments in the vicinity of the area, including campgrounds, day use sites and trailheads and a resort. Noise from these developments would be present from most locations in the area, which limits the opportunity for solitude. Potential for encounters with other visitors is high during the summer months. When Highway 120 is closed during the winter months, the area receives little to no use.

#### *Other Features of Value*

The area is a habitat for the Yosemite toad and Sierra Nevada bighorn sheep. Saddlebag Lake lies within the polygon. There is habitat for the sensitive *Botrychiums* (moonworts).

#### **Manageability**

The polygon is elongated vertically from north to south as it follows the existing wilderness boundary and follows the forest road accessing Saddlebag Lake. The southern boundary follows Highway 120 to the Yosemite National Park Boundary at the Tioga entrance station. The polygon is within a concentrated recreation area with campgrounds and day use facilities, trailheads and a resort. The existing wilderness boundary as currently drawn excludes these features. Saddlebag Lake is a reservoir with a dam. There is a motorized ferry that operates during the summer months. There is also an accessible nonmotorized trail. The area contains habitat for Yosemite toad and Sierra Nevada bighorn sheep, which may require active management under the Endangered Species Act. Two water rights are present.

#### **Summary of Potential Suitability for Inclusion in the National Wilderness Preservation System**

Fish stocking occurs in the area. There are developments within the area that are substantially noticeable, including developed recreation facilities and mining sites. The polygon is immediately adjacent to Highway 120 along the southern boundary and the Tioga Pass entrance to Yosemite National Park. The area is believed to have moderate to high ecological integrity. This polygon does not present an opportunity to protect ecological groups that may be minimally represented in the National Wilderness Preservation System. Ecological groups with less than 10 percent of their national extent in the National Wilderness Preservation System comprise a low number of acres. The opportunity for solitude is degraded due to the proximity to concentrated recreation use and

the highway. The opportunity for primitive and unconfined recreation is limited due to the proximity to concentrated recreation use and developments. The proximity to concentrated recreation use and developed facilities would make it difficult to manage for wilderness characteristics. There is not an opportunity to reshape the polygon to make it more manageable. The wilderness boundary as currently drawn excludes these features. (For map see Exhibit A – Inyo National Forest Evaluation Maps – Evaluation Map A.)

## **Polygon 1211 (Lundy Canyon)**

### **General Description**

Polygon 1211 (Lundy Canyon) consists of 1,949 acres with elevations ranging from 7,600 to 10,400 feet. It is contiguous with the Hoover Wilderness and is located on the north side of Lundy Lake and Lundy Canyon. The polygon is oddly shaped (elongated from east to west) as it follows the forest boundary along the north, existing wilderness boundary on the west, and Lundy Canyon Road on the south. The majority of polygon intersects with Mt. Olsen and Hoover–Mt. Olsen Inventoried Roadless Areas. Ecosystem types include mountain mahogany, sagebrush and subalpine forest. It is currently within a wildland-urban interface. Topography is severely steep rocky slopes and gullies. There is little water present, with some ephemeral streams.

National Vegetation Classification System data indicates 4 percent of the polygon (80 acres) consists of ecological groups that have less than 10 percent of their national extent protected in the National Wilderness Preservation System.

### **Wilderness Characteristics**

#### *Degree the Area Generally Appears to be Affected Primarily by the Forces of Nature*

The polygon contains remnants of historic mining. Public comments indicate there are trails used by mountain bikers in the area. It is not certain, however, if the trails are located within the polygon boundaries.

The polygon has moderate to high ecological integrity. Human impact to plant communities is minimal to moderate. There is some alteration from invasive plant species (cheatgrass is probably increasing). There may be some departure in the fire regime due to fire suppression. There has been very little impact from humans to wildlife and fish. This area does provide contiguous habitat and connectivity for wildlife, including Sierra Nevada bighorn sheep. There is a lack of water, but there are some ephemeral stream channels present with limited riparian vegetation in unknown condition. No meadows are present. The air quality is excellent.

#### *Opportunities for Solitude or Primitive and Unconfined Recreation*

The topography is severely steep rocky slopes and gullies. There is some screening present, with some visibility down to developments in Lundy Canyon. There is southern exposure above a dammed lake and recreational developments. The area is adjacent to a concentrated recreation area and Federal Energy Regulatory Commission infrastructure. Travelers can see and hear evidence of civilization. The area receives a high amount of recreation use during the summer months, with little to no use during the winter months. Potential for encounters with other visitors is low once away from developments on south side. The opportunity for solitude is limited by the proximity to the recreation use at Lundy Lake and the paved forest road. The opportunity for primitive and unconfined recreation is limited by steep terrain.

### *Other Features of Value*

The area is a habitat for Sierra Nevada bighorn sheep and a small portion is within a priority habitat for sage grouse. There are unique metasedimentary rocks (“rooftop pendant”) in the area, as well as scenic aspen stands.

### **Manageability**

The polygon is elongated from west to east as it follows the existing wilderness boundary and parallels the paved forest road accessing Lundy Canyon. The polygon is in the vicinity of a concentrated recreation area with campgrounds and day use facilities, as well as Federal Energy Regulatory Commission licensed infrastructure. The existing wilderness boundary as currently drawn excludes these features. The area contains habitat for Sierra Nevada bighorn sheep, which may require active management under the Endangered Species Act.

### **Summary of Potential Suitability for Inclusion in the National Wilderness Preservation System**

There were few developments noted within the area, except that there may be remnants from historic mining. The polygon is in proximity of developed recreation facilities and Federal Energy Regulatory Commission licensed infrastructure. The area is believed to have moderate to high ecological integrity. This polygon does not present an opportunity to protect ecological groups that may be minimally represented in the National Wilderness Preservation System. Ecological groups with less than 10 percent of their national extent in the National Wilderness Preservation System comprise a low number of acres. The opportunity for solitude is degraded due to the proximity to concentrated recreation use. The opportunity for primitive and unconfined recreation is limited due to steep terrain. The proximity to the concentrated recreation use and Federal Energy Regulatory Commission licensed infrastructure would make it difficult to manage for wilderness characteristics. The polygon creates an odd finger that protrudes from the existing wilderness boundary. There is not an opportunity to reshape the polygon to make it more manageable. (For map see Exhibit A – Inyo National Forest Evaluation Maps – Evaluation Map A.)

## **Polygon 1232 (Willow Springs)**

### **General Description**

Polygon 1232 (Willow Springs) consists of 3,205 acres with elevations ranging from 4,400 to 6,800 feet. It is contiguous with the Inyo Mountain Wilderness, is located east of Mazourka Canyon Road and includes Willow Springs and Bee Springs. There is nothing notable about the polygon shape, as it follows the existing wilderness boundary on the east and the forest boundary on the west. However, there is a motorized trail that bisects the polygon along the wilderness boundary. The majority of polygon intersects with Paiute Inventoried Roadless Area. Ecosystem types include pinyon-juniper and xeric shrublands and blackbrush. The terrain includes the steep western escarpment of the Inyo Mountains with canyons, steep slopes and drainages.

National Vegetation Classification System data indicates less than 1 percent of the polygon (4 acres) consists of ecological groups that have less than 10 percent of their national extent protected in the National Wilderness Preservation System.

## Wilderness Characteristics

### *Degree the Area Generally Appears to be Affected Primarily by the Forces of Nature*

The area has historic mining. Mining is found in many areas with mine prospects, tailings, roads, adits and buildings throughout the polygon. These mining features are substantially noticeable. Buildings and trailers are reported to be maintained at Black Eagle Mine. There is a network of old mining roads that are substantially noticeable on the landscape. Little cultural resource surveying has been completed in the area. The five documented properties are all extensive mining sites (Betty Jumbo Mine, Clifford Mine, Omega Mine, Black Eagle Mine and Alhambra Mine).

Within the polygon the ecological integrity is moderate. There is some cheatgrass and Russian thistle, but they are not widespread. The area has a mostly natural species composition. Fire occurs within its range of variability. There are unique desert springs, flowing and in good condition. There have been some areas of historic timber harvest from mines. This area provides contiguous habitat and connectivity for wildlife.

### *Opportunities for Solitude or Primitive and Unconfined Recreation*

The topography is steep western escarpment of the Inyo Mountains with canyons, steep slopes and drainages. There is some screening due to canyons and vegetation. There is a motorized trail, Betty Jumbo Mine Road, along the eastern boundary that parallels the existing wilderness boundary. There is occasional traffic noise from the Mazourka Canyon Road. Highway 395 and the town of Independence area can be seen in the middle distance (approximately 8 miles west). Mine sites on Bureau of Land Management lands are within a half mile of the western boundary. The proximity to mining roads and development limits the opportunity for solitude. Off highway vehicle recreation, rock hounding and hunting are the primary uses of the adjoining Bureau of Land Management land. Hikers park off of Betty Jumbo Road, a motorized trail that parallels the wilderness boundary to walk to Winnedumah Paiute Monument. There are some opportunities for primitive recreation such as canyoneering, wildlife observation, spring wildflower observation, photography and exploring old mine sites. While opportunities for primitive recreation do exist, travel in this desert environment is challenging due to the lack of surface water, steep topography and routes requiring climbing skills.

### *Other Features of Value*

The area includes the rare plant Parry's monkey flower and Townsend's big-eared bats (habitat associated with mine adits). There are unique desert springs, flowing and in good condition. This polygon contains the uppermost elevations of the Mojave Desert in this region, with creosote bush and Mojave Desert species, such as *Lycium cooperi*. There are outstanding views toward the Sierra Nevada.

## Manageability

The polygon has a motorized trail that runs along the wilderness boundary. If this was cherry-stemmed, it would isolate the remaining portion of the polygon, disconnecting it from the adjoining wilderness boundary so that it would no longer be contiguous. The existing wilderness boundary was drawn to exclude the motorized trail (Betty Jumbo Mine road). There is a network of old mining roads in the area. It would be difficult to prevent vehicle incursions from the Betty Jumbo Road, as well as the network of old mining roads. Off highway vehicle recreation, rock hounding and hunting are the primary uses of the area and adjoining Bureau of Land Management land.

## Summary of Potential Suitability for Inclusion in the National Wilderness Preservation System

The developments related to mining activity are widespread and substantially noticeable. The area is believed to have moderate ecological integrity with few invasive plant species and unique desert springs that are flowing and in good condition. This polygon does not present an opportunity to protect ecological groups that may be minimally represented in the National Wilderness Preservation System. Ecological groups with less than 10 percent of their national extent in the National Wilderness Preservation System comprise a low number of acres. The opportunity for solitude is degraded due to the proximity to motorized recreation (motorized trails and Mazourka Canyon Road), as well as the visibility to Highway 395 and the town of Independence. There may be opportunity for primitive and unconfined recreation. The motorized trail runs along the wilderness boundary. If cherry-stemmed, the remaining portion of the polygon would be disconnected from the adjoining wilderness boundary so that it would no longer be contiguous. There is not an opportunity to reshape the polygon to make it more manageable. There are general tribal concerns regarding tribal access and use. (For map see Exhibit A – Inyo National Forest Evaluation Maps – Evaluation Map G.)

### **Polygon 1236 (West of Inyo Mountains Wilderness)**

#### General Description

Polygon 1236 (West of Inyo Mountains Wilderness) consists of 73,128 acres with elevations ranging from 4,400 to 9,500 feet. It is contiguous with the Inyo Mountains Wilderness and is located west of the Inyo Mountains Wilderness, between Eureka Valley Road and Mazourka Canyon, and includes Harkless Flat, Andrews Mountain, Mazourka Peak, and Santa Rita Spring. It is a large polygon on the west side of the Inyo Mountains Wilderness between Eureka Valley Road on the north and Mazourka Canyon on the south. The majority of polygon intersects with the Paiute and Andrews Mountain Inventoried Roadless Areas. Ecosystem types include pinyon-juniper, sagebrush, subalpine forest, and xeric shrublands and blackbrush. The topography includes the steep western escarpment of the Inyo Mountains, with steep slopes, canyons, extremely rugged terrain; and high elevation desert plateaus with steep to gentle slopes along the eastern side.

National Vegetation Classification System data indicates 44 percent of the area of the polygon (32,500 acres) consists of ecological groups that have less than 10 percent of their national extent protected in the National Wilderness Preservation System. The most prevalent are Inter-Mountain big sagebrush shrubland, Inter-Mountain Basin montane sagebrush steppe, Inter-Mountain Basin mixed salt desert scrub and Great Basin xeric mixed sagebrush shrubland. An additional 26,000 acres consists of Great Basin pinyon-juniper woodland, which has less than 15 percent of its total national extent protected in the National Wilderness Preservation System.

#### Wilderness Characteristics

##### *Degree the Area Generally Appears to be Affected Primarily by the Forces of Nature*

Mining was extensive in this area. There may have been small areas of historic harvest related to mining. There are also active grazing allotments in the area. There are remnants of historic mining in many areas, including some that are substantially noticeable. Mine prospects, mine tailings, mining road and mining adits are found throughout the area. There is a boundary fence along the south side of T. 12 S., R. 35 E., section 35 and mining relics east of Forest Service Road 12S103. The area includes the former Saline Valley Road alignments along the northeast perimeter. There are mining ruins and relics. There are no other known structures or dwellings.

Old mining shacks are found at the narrows (T. 10 S., R. 36 E., section 15). There are mining site and ruins west of Andrews Mountain. There are mining ruins, adits and a dump in T. 10 S., R. 36 E., section 20. Nothing is being maintained. Livestock grazing occurs in the area. There is fencing and other range improvements. There are fences along the existing wilderness boundary in T. 11 S., R. 36 E. and section 18. Very little cultural survey work has been done in the area, but there are 20 documented cultural resource sites including prehistoric sites with rock rings and artifact scatters and historic sites associated with historic mining in Mazourka Canyon. Undocumented mining features and structures are known in the vicinity of Harkless Flat.

The polygon has high ecological integrity. Portions of the area reflect conditions that would normally be associated with the area absent human intervention. There are some historic mining sites with adits, shafts and buildings, but overall, there is a low incidence of impact from humans within this area. There is low human impact to plant communities. It is mostly unsurveyed for invasive plant species, but patches of cheatgrass and other species are likely. In the northeastern corner, there is some cheatgrass and Russian thistle, but they are not widespread. There is little impact from humans within this area on wildlife. This area does provide habitat and connectivity for wildlife. Mostly intermittent stream channels and some springs are found. Riparian areas are mostly in good condition. Some salt cedar (nonnative plant species) is present. There is some trampling from domestic livestock and tule elk. There have also been some recent floods and debris flows. There are six unauthorized routes between Santa Rita Flat and Mazourka Peak.

#### *Opportunities for Solitude or Primitive and Unconfined Recreation*

The polygon's topography includes the steep western escarpment of Inyo Mountains, with steep slopes, canyons, extremely rugged terrain and high elevation desert plateaus with steep to gentle slopes along the eastern side. There is screening due to topography and vegetation. Screening is variable along the western escarpment (primarily from topography, little vegetation provides screening). There is some visibility to Highway 395. In the northeastern corner of the polygon there is screening from vegetation and topography and views to Death Valley National Park. The western boundary (along the escarpment) is approximately one mile from the Owens Valley (roads, transmission lines, livestock grazing) and 3 to 5 miles from Highway 395 along most of the western perimeter. The northern perimeter is bounded by Eureka Valley Road (paved road and less traveled route to Death Valley National Park) and Saline Valley Road. The southeastern perimeter is bounded by Mazourka Canyon Road (county road), which accesses mining claims and the communication site on top of Mazourka Peak. There are numerous roads and motorized trails within this polygon along the edge, as well as through the middle of the polygon. Off highway vehicle recreation, dispersed camping, mineral exploration and sightseeing are popular activities throughout this area, primarily during the spring and fall months. There is lower use in the summer due to heat. The opportunity for solitude is very limited in the areas in proximity to the road and motorized trail system. There are few quiet places free from motorized noise within the polygon, away from roads and motorized trails and mostly in the canyons. The potential for encounters with other visitors is low to medium. Most of the use is around roads and motorized trails. Marble Canyon is a scenic destination for day hikers. Livestock operations may impact opportunities for solitude during the summer. There is a cattle drive that occurs in the southern portion and in adjacent wilderness. The pinyon-juniper woodlands and subalpine areas offer primitive recreation opportunities typical of this type of woodland: hiking, horseback riding and deer hunting in the fall. Backpacking opportunities are limited to the few areas with surface water. There are also opportunities for wildlife observation, photography and enjoying nature. Winter snowpack sometimes allows cross-country skiing in higher elevations. Along the western escarpment of the Inyo Mountains, there are some opportunities for recreation such as

canyoneering, wildlife observation, spring wildflower observation, photography and exploring old mine sites. While opportunities for primitive recreation do exist, travel in this desert environment is challenging due to the lack of surface water, steep topography and routes requiring climbing skills.

### *Other Features of Value*

The area includes habitat for Townsend's big-eared bat, a proposed species of conservation concern and Forest Service sensitive species, which occur within historic mining areas. There are many rare plants, including: pinyon beardtongue, Inyo milkvetch, pinyon rockcress, Mojave fishhook, and cliffdweller, a Forest Service sensitive species. The lowest elevations of bristlecone pine occur here, in an ecological refugium that may host rare plants as climate continues to warm. There are steep escarpments of the Inyo Mountains with complex geology. The Narrows of Marble Canyon is a unique geologic feature in the northeastern corner. The area includes vistas of the Sierra Nevada range, prehistoric cultural resource sites and remnants of historic mining.

### Manageability

This is a large polygon located between the forest boundary within one mile of the Owens Valley, and the Inyo Mountains Wilderness. There are numerous cherry-stem roads and motorized trails throughout the polygon along the edge and in the middle, including along the eastern perimeter, which adjoins the Inyo Mountains Wilderness. The existing wilderness boundary excludes these features. There are active grazing allotments and improvements in the area.

### Summary of Potential Suitability for Inclusion in the National Wilderness Preservation System

There is mining and grazing activity in the area. There are developments related to mining activity as well as range improvements. The area is believed to have high ecological integrity. This polygon presents an opportunity to protect ecological groups that may be minimally represented in the National Wilderness Preservation System. Ecological groups with less than 10 percent of their national extent in the National Wilderness Preservation System comprise 32,500 acres. An ecological group with less than 15 percent of its national extent in the National Wilderness Preservation System comprises an additional 26,000 acres. The opportunity for solitude is degraded due to the proximity to motorized recreation (roads and motorized trails). There may be opportunity for primitive and unconfined recreation. There is limited opportunity to reshape to polygon to make it suitable or manageable for wilderness characteristics. The highest potential opportunity is where the polygon adjoins the Inyo Mountains Wilderness, however much of that area is bounded by roads or motorized trails which would make reshaping impractical. There are general tribal concerns regarding tribal access and use. (For map see Exhibit A – Inyo National Forest Evaluation Maps – Evaluation Map F and Evaluation Map G.)

## **Polygon 1242 (North of Little Cowhorn Valley)**

### General Description

Polygon 1242 (North of Little Cowhorn Valley) consists of 2,678 acres with elevations ranging from 7,600 to 8,400 feet. It is contiguous with Piper Mountains Wilderness (Bureau of Land Management) and located west of the Piper Mountains Wilderness, north of Little Cowhorn Valley. The area is not within any inventoried roadless areas. Ecosystem types include pinyon-juniper and xeric shrublands and blackbrush. Most of the polygon is within a mapped wildfire restoration zone (60 percent) and a wildfire maintenance zone (40 percent). The topography is flat and rolling hills.

National Vegetation Classification System data shows 53 percent of the area of the polygon (1,410 acres) consists of ecological groups that have less than 10 percent of their national extent protected in the National Wilderness Preservation System. An additional 1,100 acres consists of Great Basin pinyon-juniper woodland, which has less than 15 percent of its total national extent protected in the National Wilderness Preservation System.

## Wilderness Characteristics

### *Degree the Area Generally Appears to be Affected Primarily by the Forces of Nature*

There has been some historic mining and timber harvest but for the most part, there has been very little impact from humans within this area. It is mostly in its natural state with good ecological integrity. Human impact on plant communities is low to moderate. There are some invasive species present (some cheatgrass and Russian thistle). Fire has occurred within its range of natural variability. The area does provide contiguous habitat and connectivity for wildlife. The alkali flats are drying out (probable climate change effect, sagebrush converting to alkali flat). The combination of alkali flats and old growth pinyon-juniper is a unique feature of this area. The area has had very little survey for cultural resources.

### *Opportunities for Solitude or Primitive and Unconfined Recreation*

The topography is flat and rolling hills with some screening present from topography and trees. Potential for encountering other visitors is low. The eastern portion of the polygon follows the forest boundary with Bureau of Land Management, and is contiguous with Piper Mountain Wilderness (Bureau of Land Management). The polygon is surrounded by a road system to the north, west and south, and there is one road that is cherry-stemmed in the northwest corner of the polygon. The Eureka Valley Road is within a half mile of the southern boundary of the polygon. There are opportunities for primitive-type recreation activities such as cross-country hiking, general forest exploration and photography during the summer, and deer hunting in the fall.

### *Other Features of Value*

There are many rare plants including Little Cut Leaf, Compact Fleabane, Inyo Milk Vetch, Pinyon Beardtongue, and Inyo onion. The combination of alkali flats and old growth pinyon-juniper is a unique feature of this area. Alkali flats were identified as an under-represented type in the R5 research natural area system during the plan revision assessment phase.

## Manageability

There is nothing notable that would affect manageability of the polygon, except that it is surrounded by a road system and would add an irregularly shaped finger to the Piper Wilderness.

## Summary of Potential Suitability for Inclusion in the National Wilderness Preservation System

There are no known developments in the area that would degrade the undeveloped quality. The area is believed to have good ecological integrity with some invasive plant species and little impact from humans in the area, with the exception that there has been some historic mining and timber harvest. This polygon presents a limited opportunity to protect ecological groups that may be minimally represented in the National Wilderness Preservation System. Ecological groups with less than 10 percent of their national extent in the National Wilderness Preservation System comprise 1,400 acres. An ecological group with less than 15 percent of its national extent in the National Wilderness Preservation System comprises an additional 1,100 acres. Lightly traveled roads have the potential to impact the opportunity for solitude. There are road systems that

surround the area, including one road that is cherry-stemmed in the northwest portion of the polygon. The Eureka Valley Road is approximately half mile from the southern boundary of the polygon. There may be opportunity for primitive and unconfined recreation. The polygon is irregularly shaped due to a cherry-stem road in the northwest corner that protrudes into the polygon. There may be an opportunity to reshape the polygon to make it more manageable; however, it would add an irregularly shaped finger to the Piper Mountain Wilderness. There are general tribal concerns regarding tribal access and use. (For map see Exhibit A – Inyo National Forest Evaluation Maps – Evaluation Map F.)

## **Polygon 1246 (North of Eureka Valley Road)**

### **General Description**

The Polygon 1246 (North of Eureka Valley Road) consists of 43,230 acres with elevations ranging from 5,000 to 8,600 feet. A very small portion along the southeast corner is contiguous with the Piper Mountains Wilderness (Bureau of Land Management). It is a large polygon located between Eureka Valley Road on the south and Highway 168 to the north, between the White Mountains and Inyo Mountains. It intersects with the Soldier Canyon Inventoried Roadless Area. Ecosystem types include pinyon-juniper, sagebrush and xeric shrublands and blackbrush. The topography includes steep to gentle slopes.

National Vegetation Classification System data indicates 48 percent of the area of the polygon (20,900 acres) consists of ecological groups that have less than 10 percent of their national extent protected in the National Wilderness Preservation System. The most prevalent are Inter-Mountain big sagebrush shrubland, Inter-Mountain Basin montane sagebrush steppe, Inter-Mountain Basin mixed salt desert scrub and Great Basin xeric mixed sagebrush shrubland. An additional 20,600 acres are comprised of Great Basin pinyon-juniper woodland, which has less than 15 percent of its total national extent protected in the National Wilderness Preservation System.

### **Wilderness Characteristics**

#### *Degree the Area Generally Appears to be Affected Primarily by the Forces of Nature*

Some historic clearing/harvesting for mining is evident. CARMA (Combined Array for Research in Millimeter-Wave Astronomy, a special use authorization) has developments that are substantially noticeable in the northern portion of the polygon. There are large numbers of prehistoric sites.

The polygon has ecological integrity, with mostly natural species composition. Much of the area reflects conditions that would normally be expected absent human intervention. There is low to moderate impact on plant communities. There is some cheatgrass that is moderately widespread in portions of the polygon. The area provides contiguous habitat connectivity for wildlife. There is limited water. Intermittent streams include Deadman Canyon, Crooked Road Canyon and Soldier Canyon. Riparian conditions are unknown, although it was noted that drainages are trampled from grazing, and illegal off highway vehicle use is widespread. There are no mapped meadows. Soils are at desired condition. Air quality is excellent. Ancient bristlecone pine are reported on some north-facing slopes of the Inyo Mountains.

#### *Opportunities for Solitude or Primitive and Unconfined Recreation*

The topography is steep to gentle slopes and there is some screening in the area from vegetation and canyons. There is very little visibility of developments. The northern boundary is Highway 168 and the southern boundary is Eureka Valley Road, a paved road and less traveled route to

Death Valley National Park. There are numerous roads and motorized trails within this polygon along the edge, as well as through the middle of the polygon. Off highway vehicle recreation, dispersed camping, mineral exploration and sightseeing are popular activities throughout this area, primarily during the spring and fall months. There is lower use in the summer due to heat. The opportunity for solitude is very limited in the areas in proximity to the road and motorized trail system. There are some quiet places free from motorized noise within the polygon, away from roads and motorized trails and mostly in the canyons. The potential for encounters ranges from very low to medium. Most of the use is around roads and motorized trails. There may be opportunities for primitive and unconfined recreation, although there are large areas with no surface water and extremely difficult terrain to travel through.

The pinyon-juniper woodlands and subalpine areas offer primitive recreation opportunities typical of the Great Basin: hiking, horseback riding and deer hunting in the fall. Backpacking is generally confined to the few areas with surface water. The degree of challenge is accentuated by the scarcity of surface water and lack of trails. There are also opportunities for wildlife observation, photography and enjoying nature. Winter snowpack sometimes allows cross-country skiing in higher elevations. Along the western escarpment of mountains, there are some opportunities for primitive recreation such as canyoneering, wildlife observation, spring wildflower observation, photography and exploring old mine sites. Several of the canyons along the western escarpment of the mountains are scenic destinations for day hikers, though some also have motorized trails and off highway vehicle recreationists. While opportunities for primitive recreation do exist, travel in the lower elevation desert environment is challenging due to the lack of surface water and steep topography.

#### *Other Features of Value*

The area includes rare plants including Mojave fishhook cactus and little cutleaf. There are large numbers of prehistoric sites including prehistoric encampments, rock rings and lithic scatters. The polygon includes outstanding views of volcanic Crater Mt. Palisade glacier area and the Sierra Nevada. There is some limestone geology and also unique sedimentary and metamorphic geology.

#### **Manageability**

This is a large polygon located between the straight-line forest boundary along the western and eastern edge. There are numerous cherry-stem roads and motorized trails throughout the polygon along the edge and in the middle. It was noted that there is illegal off highway vehicle use occurring that is widespread along the western and southern portion of the polygon. The area includes one water right.

#### **Summary of Potential**

##### **Suitability for Inclusion in the National Wilderness Preservation System**

There has been clearing and harvest related to mining activities. Developments that are substantially noticeable were noted in the northern portion of the polygon. The area has ecological integrity and reflects conditions that would normally be associated with the area absent human intervention. This polygon presents an opportunity to protect ecological groups that may be minimally represented in the National Wilderness Preservation System. Ecological groups with less than 10 percent of their national extent in the National Wilderness Preservation System comprise 20,900 acres. An ecological group with less than 15 percent of its national extent in the National Wilderness Preservation System comprises an additional 20,600 acres. The opportunity for solitude is degraded due to the proximity to motorized recreation (roads and motorized trails).

There may be opportunity for primitive and unconfined recreation, although surface water is limited and terrain makes travel difficult. There is limited opportunity to reshape to polygon to make it more suitable or manageable for wilderness characteristics due to the proximity to roads and motorized trails. There are general tribal concerns regarding tribal access and use. (For map see Exhibit A – Inyo National Forest Evaluation Maps – Evaluation Map F.)

## **Polygon 1248 (Redding Canyon, Black Canyon)**

### **General Description**

Polygon 1248 (Redding Canyon, Black Canyon) consists of 38,756 acres with elevations ranging from 5,000 to 10,400 feet. It is located west of White Mountain Road and the Ancient Bristlecone Pine Forest, south of Silver Canyon, and north of Highway 168, and includes Redding Canyon, Black Canyon, Marble Canyon and Black Mountain at 9,083 feet in elevation. The polygon follows the straight-line forest boundary along the western perimeter, Highway 168 along the southern perimeter, White Mountain Road along the eastern perimeter and Silver Canyon along the northern boundary. There are motorized trails throughout the area. The majority of polygon intersects with the Black Canyon Inventoried Roadless Area. Ecosystem types include pinyon-juniper, sagebrush, subalpine forest and xeric shrublands and blackbrush. The area is a sage grouse priority habitat. The terrain is extremely steep and rugged.

National Vegetation Classification System data indicates 41 percent of the area of the polygon (15,818 acres) consists of ecological groups that have less than 10 percent of their national extent protected in the National Wilderness Preservation System. The most prevalent are Inter-Mountain big sagebrush shrubland, Inter-Mountain Basin montane sagebrush steppe, Inter-Mountain Basin mixed salt desert scrub and Great Basin xeric mixed sagebrush shrubland. An additional 20,000 acres consists of Great Basin pinyon-juniper woodland, which has less than 15 percent of its total national extent protected in the National Wilderness Preservation System.

### **Wilderness Characteristics**

#### *Degree the Area Generally Appears to be Affected Primarily by the Forces of Nature*

There is some historic and modern firewood harvest in the area from Westgard Pass Road. This area includes the Historic Poleta Mining Complex. There are also prehistoric encampments (rock rings), lithic scatters, and several historic rock structures and associated refuse. Public comments indicate there are single track trails used by mountain bikers and motorcycle riders in the area.

The polygon has ecological integrity, with mostly natural species composition. The area largely reflects conditions that would normally be associated with the area absent human intervention. There are few invasive plant species. There is some cheatgrass but it is not widespread. The area provides contiguous habitat and connectivity for wildlife. Water is limited in the area. Perennial stream channels include Redding and Poleta canyons. Marble Canyon is a major intermittent stream. Some riparian vegetation is present in canyons, and is in unknown condition. There are some invasive plant species in riparian areas. There are no mapped meadows. Soils are mostly at desired conditions, with some localized mining and grazing impacts, but good overall. The air quality is excellent. Public comments indicate an ancient bristlecone pine population is on the north slopes of Black Mountain.

#### *Opportunities for Solitude or Primitive and Unconfined Recreation*

The topography is extremely steep and rugged. There is good screening from canyons and pinyon pine trees. The western boundary is generally within two miles of the Owens Valley, the southern

boundary is Highway 168, the eastern boundary is White Mountain Road (a National Forest Scenic Byway) and the northern boundary is Silver Canyon (road and transmission lines). There are numerous roads and motorized trails within this polygon protruding into the polygon from the edge, as well as through the middle of the polygon. Off highway vehicle recreation, mineral exploration and sightseeing are popular activities throughout this area. The opportunity for solitude is very limited in the areas in proximity to the road and motorized trail system. There are some quiet places free from motorized noise within the polygon, away from roads and motorized trails and mostly in the canyons. The potential for encounters is very low to medium. Most of the use is around roads and motorized trails.

The pinyon-juniper woodlands and subalpine areas offer primitive recreation opportunities typical of the Great Basin: hiking, horseback riding and deer hunting in the fall. Backpacking opportunities are limited to the few areas with surface water. The degree of challenge is accentuated by the steep terrain along the western escarpment of the White Mountains and lack of trails. There are also opportunities for wildlife observation, photography and enjoying nature, particularly in the subalpine areas off of White Mountain Road. Winter snowpack allows cross-country skiing in higher elevations, but gaining access requires more than a 10-mile hike into the area. Along the western escarpment of mountains, there are some opportunities for primitive recreation such as canyoneering, wildlife observation, spring wildflower observation, photography and exploring old mine sites. Several of the canyons along the western escarpment of the mountains including Redding Canyon and Black Canyon, are scenic destinations for day hikers, though some also have motorized trails and off highway vehicle recreationists. While opportunities for primitive recreation do exist, travel in the lower elevation desert environment is challenging due to the lack of surface water and steep topography.

#### *Other Features of Value*

The area includes a sage grouse priority habitat, Townsend's big eared bat populations, and the Panamint alligator lizard. The rare plant, Shockley's milkvetch occurs here. There are outstanding views of Volcanic Crater Mountain, Palisade glacier area and the Sierra Nevada.

#### **Manageability**

This polygon is located between the straight-line forest boundary along the western edge and the White Mountain Road on the east. There are some cherry-stem roads along the edge and motorized trails throughout the polygon along the edge and through the middle, including the trails in Black Canyon. It was noted that there is illegal motorcycle use in the northern portion of the polygon. The area contains priority habitat for sage grouse, which may require active management.

#### **Summary of Potential Suitability for Inclusion in the National Wilderness Preservation System**

There has been some mining activity and firewood removal. There are few developments noted, mostly historic foundations and structures. The area has ecological integrity and reflects conditions that would normally be associated with an area absent human intervention. This polygon presents an opportunity to protect ecological groups that may be minimally represented in the National Wilderness Preservation System. Ecological groups with less than 10 percent of their national extent in the National Wilderness Preservation System comprise 15,818 acres. An ecological group with less than 15 percent of its national extent in the National Wilderness Preservation System comprises an additional 20,000 acres. The opportunity for solitude is degraded due to the proximity to motorized recreation (roads and motorized trails). There may be

opportunity for primitive and unconfined recreation, although surface water is limited and terrain makes travel difficult. There is limited opportunity to reshape the polygon to make it more suitable or manageable for wilderness characteristics due to the proximity to roads and motorized trails. There are general tribal concerns regarding tribal access and use. (For map see Exhibit A – Inyo National Forest Evaluation Maps – Evaluation Map F.)

## **Polygon 1258 (Ancient Bristlecone Pine Forest and Wyman Canyon South)**

### **General Description**

Polygon 1258 (Ancient Bristlecone Pine Forest and Wyman Canyon South) consists of 35,248 acres with elevations ranging from 6,000 to 8,800 feet. It is located east of White Mountain Road and partially within the Ancient Bristlecone Pine Forest (including Schulman Grove), south of Wyman Canyon Road and north of Highway 168. It is a large polygon that is irregularly shaped due to cherry-stem roads that protrude into the middle of the polygon. The western boundary runs along White Mountain Road. The southwest corner of the polygon has motorized trails. The majority of the polygon intersects with the Birch Creek Inventoried Roadless Area. Ecosystem types include mountain mahogany, pinyon-juniper, sagebrush and subalpine forest. The northwest portion of the polygon is within the Ancient Bristlecone Pine Forest, and includes the Discovery Trail (National Recreation Trail). The topography is steep with rugged slopes.

National Vegetation Classification System data indicates 35 percent of the area of the polygon (12,458 acres) consists of ecological groups that have less than 10 percent of their national extent protected in the National Wilderness Preservation System. The most prevalent are Inter-Mountain big sagebrush shrubland, Inter-Mountain Basin montane sagebrush steppe, and Great Basin xeric mixed sagebrush shrubland. An additional 17,200 acres consists of Great Basin pinyon-juniper woodland, which has less than 15 percent of its total national extent protected in the National Wilderness Preservation System.

### **Wilderness Characteristics**

#### *Degree the Area Generally Appears to be Affected Primarily by the Forces of Nature*

Historic mining and grazing has occurred in the area in the past. There are remnants of historic mines associated with the Wilkerson Mining Complex and Mexican Mine (cabins, adits, tailings). The roughly 25 documented cultural properties include remains of the Wilkerson Mining Complex, the Mexican Mine (cabins, adits, tailings), a stone cabin, hunting blind and rock structure, as well as numerous prehistoric rock ring and artifact scatters. Approximately 20 percent of the area has been surveyed for cultural resources. The area contains the Schulman Grove Visitor Center and several trails within the Ancient Bristlecone Pine Forest, including the Discovery Trail (National Recreation Trail) and Methuselah Trail.

Overall, the polygon is a very high reflection of conditions that would normally be associated with the absence of human intervention. It has a high ecological integrity. Human impact to plant communities is low. Some cheatgrass and salt cedar is known from this polygon, but is not widespread. Fire is within its range of natural variability. The area provides contiguous habitat and connectivity for wildlife. The species composition is natural. The majority of the polygon has had little human impact to wildlife habitat. There are small areas of historic timber harvest, potentially related to mining activity. The legacy grazing and mining impacts are highly localized and the rest of the area is likely at desired condition for soil conditions. There are numerous springs and perennial channels including Birch Creek. There are many intermittent channels with

their condition unknown. The meadows and riparian areas are mostly unsurveyed, but there is some compromised riparian habitat due to invasive plant species. The air quality is excellent.

#### *Opportunities for Solitude or Primitive and Unconfined Recreation*

The topography is steep with rugged slopes. There is abundant screening and very little visibility to developments or roads. The western half of the polygon is in proximity to paved forest highway (White Mountain Road, which is a National Forest Scenic Byway), Highway 168, and roads and motorized trails, which limit the opportunity for solitude in these areas. The northern boundary follows Wyman Canyon Road, which is a lightly traveled system road, but is a main route that connects to Silver Canyon Road on the west side of the White Mountains, and traverses to the east side of the White Mountains to Deep Springs Valley. Although there are some roads that are cherry-stemmed and protrude into the eastern half of the polygon, these are more lightly traveled roads. There is more opportunity for solitude along the eastern half of the polygon. The area receives low amount of recreation use, except near Schulman Grove and along the White Mountain Road on the western boundary of the polygon. Notable opportunities for primitive recreation exist in the western half of the polygon, in the Ancient Bristlecone Pine Forest, which is a popular area for hiking, wildlife observation, dark skies observation, photography, exploring old mine sites and enjoying nature. Overnight camping is not allowed in the Ancient Bristlecone Pine Forest, so there are no opportunities for backpacking in this portion of the polygon. Opportunities for primitive recreation in the eastern portion of the polygon focus on hiking and hunting in the Birch Creek drainage, which has an unmaintained trail in the drainage. Most of the rest of the polygon is steep terrain and there are no trails, so there are opportunities for challenging cross-country trips. Winter snowpack allows cross-country skiing in higher elevations, but gaining access requires more than 10 miles hike into the area.

#### *Other Features of Value*

The area includes the Ancient Bristlecone Pine Forest. It is a sage grouse priority habitat and also a habitat for Townsend's big-eared bat populations, a proposed species of conservation concern and Forest Service sensitive species, associated with the mine adits. Many rare plants are known here: Spiny-Leaved Milk Vetch, Little Cutleaf, Nevada Ninebark, Bristlecone pines, Compact Fleabane, and Sensitive Dedecker's clover. There are outstanding sedimentary and metamorphic geology and colorful rock features.

#### **Manageability**

The polygon is irregularly shaped, with cherry-stemmed roads that protrude into the middle of the polygon. The polygon is bounded by a National Forest Scenic Byway on the west, a native surface system road on the north which is a main route that traverses to the east side of the White Mountains to Deep Springs Valley, forest boundary on the east and Highway 168 to the south. Wyman Canyon Road along the northern perimeter frequently needs maintenance due to wash outs. The area contains priority habitat for sage grouse, which may require active management. There are general tribal concerns regarding tribal access and use. There is one water right.

#### **Summary of Potential Suitability for Inclusion in the National Wilderness Preservation System**

There was historic mining and grazing in this area. There are developments in the area, including Schulman Grove Visitor Center, and remnant historic mining features, primarily in the western half of the polygon. The area is believed to have high ecological integrity with some invasive plant species and little impact from humans in the area, with the exception that there has been some historic mining and grazing. This polygon presents an opportunity to protect ecological

groups that may be minimally represented in the National Wilderness Preservation System. Ecological groups with less than 10 percent of their national extent in the National Wilderness Preservation System comprise 12,458 acres. An ecological group with less than 15 percent of its national extent in the National Wilderness Preservation System comprises an additional 17,200 acres. Heavily to moderately traveled roads in proximity to the area have the potential to impact the opportunity for solitude, specifically along the western and southern perimeter of the polygon. There are also cherry-stem roads that protrude into the middle of the polygon. There may be opportunity for primitive and unconfined recreation. The polygon is irregularly shaped due to cherry-stem roads that protrude into the polygon. There may be an opportunity to reshape the polygon to make it more manageable, focusing on the eastern half of the polygon, however there are still some cherry-stem roads that would make for an irregularly shaped boundary and could be difficult to manage for vehicle incursions. (For map see Exhibit A – Inyo National Forest Evaluation Maps – Evaluation Map F.)

## **Polygon 1275 (North of Silver Canyon)**

### **General Description**

Polygon 1275 (North of Silver Canyon) consists of 10,435 acres with elevations ranging from 4,800 to 9,600 feet. It is contiguous with the White Mountains Wilderness and is located west of White Mountain Road, north of Silver Canyon, within the White Mountains. It is a rectangular-shaped polygon, which follows the straight line boundary of the White Mountains Wilderness on the north and a power line corridor to the south. The area is bounded by roads along the western perimeter and one cherry-stem road protrudes into the polygon. The boundary follows the White Mountain Road in the northeastern corner. The majority of polygon intersects with Boundary Peak Inventoried Roadless Area. Ecosystem types include mountain mahogany, pinyon-juniper, sagebrush and subalpine forest. The northeast corner of the polygon is within the Ancient Bristlecone Pine Forest. There are steep canyons along the western escarpment of the White Mountains.

National Vegetation Classification System data indicates 59 percent of the area of the polygon (6,168 acres) consists of ecological groups that have less than 10 percent of their national extent protected in the National Wilderness Preservation System. The most prevalent are Inter-Mountain big sagebrush shrubland, Inter-Mountain Basin montane sagebrush steppe and Inter-Mountain Basin mixed salt desert scrub. An additional 3,200 acres are comprised of Great Basin pinyon-juniper woodland, which has less than 15 percent of its total national extent protected in the National Wilderness Preservation System.

### **Wilderness Characteristics**

#### *Degree the Area Generally Appears to be Affected Primarily by the Forces of Nature*

There is historic mining on the western side of the polygon, including Gunter Creek Mining Site.

Very little of the area is surveyed. Three documented properties include a historic can dump, a prehistoric lithic scatter and the Gunter Creek Mining Site. The Gunter Creek Mine area contains several structures, including roads, trash, pipe, lumber, adits, shafts and platforms. Public comments indicate there are single track trails used by mountain bikers and motorcycle riders in the area.

This polygon has high ecological integrity. Only one invasive species has been identified (cheatgrass). This area does provide contiguous habitat and connectivity for wildlife. There are some localized impacts to soils (off highway vehicle incursions); however, the majority of the

area is at desired condition for soils. The area has limited water. Silver Canyon and potentially Gunter Creek are perennial channels. There are no mapped meadows. There is riparian vegetation within the canyons in unknown condition. The air quality is excellent.

#### *Opportunities for Solitude or Primitive and Unconfined Recreation*

The topography has steep slopes and canyons along the western escarpment of the White Mountains making it difficult to access. The west perimeter contains a network of roads and motorized trails. White Mountain Road, a National Forest Scenic Byway, runs along the perimeter in the northeast corner. The interior of the polygon is several miles from any road or motorized trails. There is likely regular noise from vehicles on road and motorized trail network to the west that could be heard along the western perimeter of the area. There is regular noise that would be heard from vehicles near White Mountain Road in the northeast corner. There is opportunity for solitude in the interior portion of the polygon. Steep canyons also offer a good opportunity for solitude. From the ridge tops, Bishop and the Owens Valley are visible. The potential for encounters with other users is low and mostly concentrated on the western edge of the polygon. There are opportunities for primitive and unconfined recreation, although it could be a little limited due to steep terrain. The pinyon-juniper woodlands and subalpine zone along the eastern side of the polygon offer primitive recreation opportunities typical of the Great Basin: hiking, horseback riding and deer hunting in the fall. There are also opportunities for photography and enjoying nature, particularly in the areas off of White Mountain Road. Winter snowpack allows cross-country skiing in higher elevations, but gaining access requires more than a 10 mile hike into the area. Along the western escarpment of mountains, there are some opportunities for primitive recreation such as canyoneering, wildlife observation, spring wildflower observation, photography and exploring old mine sites. While opportunities for primitive recreation do exist, travel in the lower elevation desert environment is challenging due to the lack of surface water, lack of trails and steep topography. The large elevation gains also accentuate the challenge.

#### *Other Features of Value*

There is outstanding geology and views to the Volcanic Tablelands and the Sierra Nevada.

#### **Manageability**

The boundary on the west side of the polygon is in proximity to roads and motorized trails, however, due to steep terrain there is little chance of vehicle incursion. The east-west boundary on the south side of the polygon is not based on easily identified natural or man-man features. There are general tribal concerns about access and use. Current uses in the area include canyoneering, rock hounding, hiking, and hunting. Off highway vehicle recreation is a popular activity in the western portion of the polygon associated with the historic mining sites.

#### **Summary of Potential Suitability for Inclusion in the National Wilderness Preservation System**

There was historic mining that occurred in the area. A few developments were noted associated with historic mining features, although most of them are located outside the polygon. The area is believed to have high ecological integrity with few invasive plant species. This polygon presents a moderate opportunity to protect ecological groups that may be minimally represented in the National Wilderness Preservation System. Ecological groups with less than 10 percent of their national extent in the National Wilderness Preservation System comprise 6,168 acres. An ecological group with less than 15 percent of its national extent in the National Wilderness Preservation System comprises an additional 3,200 acres. Roads and motorized trails within or in proximity to the western perimeter, as well as White Mountain Road in the northeastern corner,

have the potential to impact the opportunity for solitude. There may be opportunity for primitive and unconfined recreation, although it may be limited due to steep terrain. The western perimeter is oddly shaped due to the presence of roads, including one cherry-stem road that protrudes into the polygon. The southern boundary is a straight line that is not identifiable based on a natural or man-made feature. There may be an opportunity to reshape the polygon to exclude the motorized trails, as well as tie the boundary to a natural feature, although it would add an irregularly shaped finger to the White Mountain Wilderness. (For map see Exhibit A – Inyo National Forest Evaluation Maps – Evaluation Map F.)

## **Polygon 1276 (Gunter Canyon)**

### **General Description**

Polygon 1276 (Gunter Canyon) contains 1,048 acres with elevations ranging from 4,800 to 9,600 feet. It is contiguous with White Mountains Wilderness and is located northwest of Gunter Canyon, within the White Mountains. It is a small polygon between Gunter Canyon Road and the White Mountains Wilderness, with forest boundary on the west (with Bureau of Land Management). The polygon includes an area that parallels a system road that was excluded during the designation of the White Mountains Wilderness. A small portion of the polygon (buffer between the road and White Mountain Wilderness) intersects with Boundary Peak Inventoried Roadless Area. Ecosystem types include pinyon-juniper and xeric shrublands and blackbrush.

National Vegetation Classification System data indicates 73 percent of the polygon (764 acres) consists of ecological groups that have less than 10 percent of their national extent protected in the National Wilderness Preservation System. None of the groups are prevalent in the polygon.

### **Wilderness Characteristics**

#### *Degree the Area Generally Appears to be Affected Primarily by the Forces of Nature*

Historic mining occurred in the area. There are no known developments, although according to the United States Geological Survey quad there is one open pit mine in the area, and shafts along the western boundary.

The polygon likely has high ecological integrity with few invasive plant species (possibly cheatgrass). There are no perennial stream channels; however, there are few intermittent channels.

#### *Opportunities for Solitude or Primitive and Unconfined Recreation*

The polygon is a small polygon that is surrounded by road systems and historic mining activity. Part of the polygon encompasses the small buffer between an existing road system and White Mountains Wilderness. It is a popular paragliding location.

#### *Other Features of Value*

No other features of value were noted.

### **Manageability**

The polygon is small in size and surrounded by a road system.

### **Summary of Potential Suitability for Inclusion in the National Wilderness Preservation System**

There was historic mining that occurred in the area. There are no known developments, with the exception of an open pit mine and shafts noted on the United States Geological Survey quad. The

area is believed to have high ecological integrity with few invasive plant species. This polygon presents a limited opportunity to protect ecological groups that may be minimally represented in the National Wilderness Preservation System. Ecological groups with less than 10 percent of their national extent in the National Wilderness Preservation System comprise 764 acres. Roads in proximity to the polygon have the potential to impact the opportunity for solitude. There may be opportunity for primitive and unconfined recreation. There may be an opportunity to reshape the polygon, although it would add a very small area, somewhat isolated by the road system, creating an irregularly shaped boundary and result in a small amount of acreage added to the White Mountains Wilderness.

## **Polygon 1281 (Ancient Bristlecone Pine Forest and Dead Horse Meadow)**

### **General Description**

Polygon 1281 (Ancient Bristlecone Pine Forest and Dead Horse Meadow) consists of 11,210 acres with elevations ranging from 7,200 to 9,600 feet. It is contiguous with the White Mountains Wilderness and located east of White Mountain Road, northeast of Schulman Grove. It parallels the existing wilderness boundary to the forest boundary on the east. It is an elongated, rectangular shaped polygon that runs west to east, east of White Mountain Road to the forest boundary, following the existing straight line wilderness boundary. The southern straight line boundary is the power line corridor. The majority of polygon intersects with Boundary Peak and Blanco Mountain Inventoried Roadless Areas. Ecosystem types include mountain mahogany, pinyon-juniper, sagebrush and subalpine forest. The western portion of the polygon is within the Ancient Bristlecone Pine Forest. The topography features the plateau area of the White Mountains with steep to gentle slopes.

National Vegetation Classification System data indicates 31 percent of the area of the polygon (3,419 acres) consists of ecological groups that have less than 10 percent of their national extent protected in the National Wilderness Preservation System. The most prevalent is Inter-Mountain Basin montane sagebrush steppe. An additional 6,300 acres consists of Great Basin pinyon-juniper woodland, which has less than 15 percent of its total national extent protected in the National Wilderness Preservation System.

### **Wilderness Characteristics**

#### *Degree the Area Generally Appears to be Affected Primarily by the Forces of Nature*

There was historic mining and associated timber harvest in the area. There may have been grazing in the past as well. Only about 20 percent of the area has been surveyed for cultural resources. The six documented sites include prehistoric encampments (rock rings and artifact scatters) and one potential historic structure or ruins.

The polygon has good ecological integrity and conditions represent an area absent of human intervention. There is low impact by humans to plant communities. There are no known invasive plant species although there may be some cheatgrass. There is minimal past or current vegetative management. This polygon has several motorized trails within it. Other than that, there is very little human impact within this polygon. The area provides contiguous habitat and connectivity for wildlife. Perennial channels include Crooked Creek, Mill Canyon and Water Canyon. There are numerous springs present. There are no mapped meadows, but riparian vegetation is associated with perennial channels and springs. Some are likely found in canyons. These are in

unknown condition. There are legacy grazing and mining impacts. These are highly localized and the majority of the area is at desired condition for soils. The air quality is excellent.

#### *Opportunities for Solitude or Primitive and Unconfined Recreation*

The area has steep to gentle slopes with some screening present due to topography, especially from vegetation and canyons. A utility right of way and Wyman Canyon Road exist along the southern perimeter. Wyman Road is approximately one quarter mile from the southern boundary. The western boundary is White Mountain Road. There is a motorized trail in the vicinity of Dead Horse Meadow that runs north to south and bisects the polygon. This motorized trail is cherry-stemmed where it enters the White Mountain Wilderness. Most of area is free from motorized noise, especially in the canyons. However, it is likely to hear regular noise from vehicles on White Mountain Road (paved forest road that is a National Forest Scenic Byway), as well as Wyman Canyon Road. The southern boundary may be far enough away from Wyman Canyon Road that motorized noise would not affect opportunities for solitude. The motorized trail in the vicinity of Dead Horse Meadow is currently heavily damaged by rains and motorized travel is difficult. There may be some impacts to solitude in area adjacent to the route. Visitor use in the area is thought to be low, with most of the use occurring during the summer and fall months. White Mountain Road and Wyman Canyon Road may be visible.

Notable opportunities for primitive recreation exist in the western half of the polygon, in the Ancient Bristlecone Pine Forest: hiking on three unmaintained forest system trails, wildlife observation, dark skies observation, photography and enjoying nature. The high elevation and lack of maintained trails adds challenge to the visitor experience. Overnight camping is not allowed in the Ancient Bristlecone Pine Forest, so there are no opportunities for backpacking in this portion of the polygon. Opportunities for primitive recreation in the eastern portion of the polygon focus on hiking, horseback riding and hunting in the Crooked Creek drainage. Most of the rest of the polygon is steep terrain without trails, so there are opportunities for adventurous cross-country trips. Winter snowpack allows cross-country skiing in higher elevations, but gaining access requires more than 10 miles ski in to the area.

#### *Other Features of Value*

The area features outstanding metamorphic and sedimentary geology. It includes sage grouse habitat, the rare plant, Booth's evening primrose, and Ancient Bristlecone Pine Forest.

#### **Manageability**

The east-west boundary on the southern side of the polygon is not based on easily identified natural or man-made features. Utility right of way and Wyman Canyon Road exist along the southern perimeter. Wyman Road is approximately a quarter mile from southern boundary. The western boundary is White Mountain Road. There is a motorized trail in the vicinity of Dead Horse Meadow that runs north to south and bisects the polygon. This motorized trail is cherry-stemmed where it enters the White Mountain Wilderness. The area contains sage grouse habitat, which may require active management. There are general tribal concerns regarding tribal access and use. There is one private land inholding, access is unknown.

#### **Summary of Potential Suitability for Inclusion in the National Wilderness Preservation System**

There was historic mining and associated timber harvest that occurred in the area. No developments were noted except possibly one historic structure. It is unknown if there are grazing improvements in the area. The area is believed to have good ecological integrity with few

invasive plant species. Roads and motorized trails within or in proximity to the area have the potential to impact the opportunity for solitude. This polygon presents a moderate opportunity to protect ecological groups that may be minimally represented in the National Wilderness Preservation System. Ecological groups with less than 10 percent of their national extent in the National Wilderness Preservation System comprise 3,419 acres. An ecological group with less than 15 percent of its national extent in the National Wilderness Preservation System comprises an additional 6,300 acres. Most of the area is free from motorized noise, especially in the canyons. There may be opportunity for primitive and unconfined recreation. There may be an opportunity to reshape the polygon, excluding (cherry-stem) the motorized trails, as well as tie the southern boundary to a natural feature. (For map see Exhibit A – Inyo National Forest Evaluation Maps – Evaluation Map F.)

## **Polygon 1295 (White Mountain Road, Barcroft Research Station)**

### **General Description**

Polygon 1295 (White Mountain Road, Barcroft Research Station) consists of 2,265 acres ranging in elevation from 10,500 to 12,500 feet. It is contiguous with the White Mountains Wilderness and located along the White Mountain Road, between Patriarch Grove and White Mountain Research Station (Barcroft), near White Mountain Peak. The polygon encompasses an area that was excluded (cherry-stemmed) during the 2009 legislation due to power lines, White Mountain Road, and the White Mountain Research Station facilities. A small portion (north half) of the polygon intersects with the Boundary Peak Inventoried Roadless Area. The ecosystem type is sagebrush. The south corner of the polygon is within the Ancient Bristlecone Pine Forest. The entire polygon is within a mapped wildfire restoration zone.

National Vegetation Classification System data indicates 16 percent of the area of the polygon (657 acres) consists of ecological groups that have less than 10 percent of their national extent protected in the National Wilderness Preservation System. Each of these ecological groups, however, comprises less than 1,000 acres in this polygon.

### **Wilderness Characteristics**

#### *Degree the Area Generally Appears to be Affected Primarily by the Forces of Nature*

White Mountain Road and power line corridor is within or adjacent to the area. There is limited water and no perennial streams. There are possibly some intermittent channels. The condition is unknown.

#### *Opportunities for Solitude or Primitive and Unconfined Recreation*

The area is immediately adjacent to White Mountain Road (National Forest Scenic Byway) and Barcroft Research Station, which limits the opportunity for solitude. The opportunity for primitive and unconfined recreation is also limited by the proximity to the paved forest road and transmission lines.

#### *Other Features of Value*

No other features of value were noted.

### **Manageability**

This polygon is the area that was cherry-stemmed, due to the power line corridor and White Mountain Road, during the 2009 legislation which designated the White Mountains Wilderness.

## Summary of Potential Suitability for Inclusion in the National Wilderness Preservation System

This area would not be manageable for wilderness characteristics. The boundaries drawn for the White Mountains Wilderness as part of the 2009 legislation excluded this area from wilderness designation due to existing uses and developments. This polygon presents a limited opportunity to protect ecological groups that may be minimally represented in the National Wilderness Preservation System. Ecological groups with less than 10 percent of their national extent in the National Wilderness Preservation System comprise 657 acres. (For map see Exhibit A – Inyo National Forest Evaluation Maps – Evaluation Map C.)

### **Polygon 1297 (North of Jeffrey Mine)**

#### General Description

Polygon 1297 (North of Jeffrey Mine) consists of 1,092 acres with elevations ranging from 5,500 to 6,500 feet. It is contiguous with the White Mountains Wilderness and located west of White Mountain Road, north of Silver Canyon, within the White Mountains. It is a small polygon on the west side of the White Mountains, east of Hammil Valley and north of Jeffrey Mine. The polygon encompasses an area that was excluded (cherry-stemmed) during the 2009 legislation due to roads, mining, and water system access. The majority of the polygon intersects with Boundary Peak Inventoried Roadless Area. Ecosystem types include pinyon-juniper and xeric shrublands and blackbrush. The entire polygon is within a mapped wildfire restoration zone.

National Vegetation Classification System data indicates 83 percent of the area of the polygon (903 acres) consists of ecological groups that have less than 10 percent of their national extent protected in the National Wilderness Preservation System. Each of these ecological groups, however, comprises less than 1,000 acres in this polygon.

#### Wilderness Characteristics

##### *Degree the Area Generally Appears to be Affected Primarily by the Forces of Nature*

There are historic mining features (an open pit mine). The polygon includes water systems (aqueduct and ditches). Perennial streams include Willow Creek, Cottonwood Creek and Lone Tree Creek, all in unknown condition.

##### *Opportunities for Solitude or Primitive and Unconfined Recreation*

There are cherry-stem roads that protrude into the polygon, nearly splitting the polygon in thirds. The roads are probably lightly used, but would impact the opportunity for solitude. There may be opportunity for primitive and unconfined recreation, although it is likely limited.

##### *Other Features of Value*

No other features of value were noted.

#### Manageability

This polygon is the area that was cherry-stemmed, due to roads, mining and water system access, during the 2009 legislation that designated the White Mountains Wilderness.

## Summary of Potential Suitability for Inclusion in the National Wilderness Preservation System

This area would not be manageable for wilderness characteristics. The boundaries drawn for the White Mountains Wilderness as part of the 2009 legislation excluded this area from wilderness designation due to roads and existing uses. This polygon presents a limited opportunity to protect ecological groups that may be minimally represented in the National Wilderness Preservation System. Ecological groups with less than 10 percent of their national extent in the National Wilderness Preservation System comprise 903 acres. (For map see Exhibit A – Inyo National Forest Evaluation Maps – Evaluation Map C.)

### **Polygon 1301 (Leidy Creek South)**

#### General Description

Polygon 1301 (Leidy Creek South) consists of 3,010 acres with elevations ranging from 5,500 to 7,600 feet. It is contiguous with the White Mountains Wilderness and recommended wilderness and located on the east side of the White Mountains, west of Fish Lake Valley, south of Leidy Creek. It is oddly shaped along the Von Schmidt Line (state line) due to the boundary with recommended wilderness. It follows the forest boundary on the east side of the polygon. A small portion of the polygon intersects with the Boundary Peak Inventoried Roadless Area. Ecosystem types include pinyon-juniper, sagebrush and xeric shrublands and blackbrush. The entire polygon is within a mapped wildfire restoration zone.

National Vegetation Classification System data indicates 74 percent of the area of the polygon (2,224 acres) consists of ecological groups that have less than 10 percent of their national extent protected in the National Wilderness Preservation System. Each of these ecological groups, however, comprises less than 1,000 acres in this polygon.

#### Wilderness Characteristics

##### *Degree the Area Generally Appears to be Affected Primarily by the Forces of Nature*

There is very little impact from humans within this area. Fish stocking has occurred in this area, and it is unknown if it still is occurring. No developments were noted. It is unknown if there are any structures, dwellings or other relics of past occupation present.

The polygon has moderate ecological integrity. There are some invasive plant species, including cheatgrass and halogeton, which are increasing. Brook and rainbow trout were introduced into previously fishless waters. They are self-sustaining populations which have displaced endemic species. There is historic fish stocking. It is unknown if the Nevada Division of Wildlife still stocks. There is very little impact from humans within this area on wildlife. This area has limited habitat fragmentation and the connectivity between pinyon-juniper habitats and shrublands remains intact. There is some alteration from invasive plant species, mining and wild horses. A departure from the natural fire regime is evidenced by pinyon pine expansion. There is departure from natural conditions in spring channels due to fish introductions. There are no mapped meadows and the riparian condition is unknown. Soils are likely at the desired condition. The air quality is excellent.

##### *Opportunities for Solitude or Primitive and Unconfined Recreation*

The topography is steep on the western edge leading to the White Mountains Wilderness. Low angle open alluvial fans are found on the lower slopes on the east side. The area is mostly open with little screening, except in the canyons on the west side. From the eastern portion of the

polygon, private land development (Fish Lake Valley), power lines and Highway 264 are visible. The area is quiet and free from motorized noise, especially on the western side of the polygon, which adjoins the White Mountains Wilderness. There is a lightly used road along the northern boundary. The potential for encounters with other visitors is low. The area is largely undeveloped and there is likely opportunity for primitive-type recreation activities such as cross-country hiking, hunting and general forest exploration with some degree of challenge due to the terrain.

#### *Other Features of Value*

No other features of value are noted.

#### **Manageability**

Management of the Paiute cutthroat trout population, which is federally listed as threatened, requires road and equipment access. The population is within White Mountains Wilderness, and the road access is along Leidy Creek, along the north perimeter of the polygon. There are two water rights.

#### **Summary of Potential Suitability for Inclusion in the National Wilderness Preservation System**

Fish stocking has occurred in the area. No developments were noted. It is unknown if there are grazing improvements in the area. The area is believed to have moderate ecological integrity with some invasive plant species. This polygon presents a limited opportunity to protect ecological groups that may be minimally represented in the National Wilderness Preservation System. Ecological groups with less than 10 percent of their national extent in the National Wilderness Preservation System comprise 2,224 acres. Visibility to private land development, power lines and Highway 264 has the potential to impact the opportunity for solitude. Most of the area is free from motorized noise, especially along the western perimeter of the polygon. There may be opportunity for primitive and unconfined recreation. The polygon is currently oddly shaped due to the Von Schmidt line and it adjoins recommended wilderness. The polygon has the potential to be reshaped. (For map see Exhibit A – Inyo National Forest Evaluation Maps – Evaluation Map C.)

### **Polygon 1308 (Indian Creek to Leidy Creek)**

#### **General Description**

Polygon 1308 (Indian Creek to Leidy Creek) consists of 13,886 acres, ranging in elevation from 5,200 to 9,000 feet. It is contiguous with the White Mountains Wilderness and located on the east side of the White Mountains between Indian Creek on the north and Leidy Creek to the south. The western portion of polygon intersects with Boundary Peak Inventoried Roadless Area. Ecosystem types include pinyon-juniper and xeric shrublands and blackbrush. The entire polygon is within a mapped wildfire restoration zone. There is steep terrain in the western portion of the polygon, but in the eastern portion it is relatively flat and open (down on alluvial fans).

National Vegetation Classification System data indicates 76 percent of the area of the polygon (10,534 acres) consists of ecological groups that have less than 10 percent of their national extent protected in the National Wilderness Preservation System. The most prevalent are Inter-Mountain big sagebrush shrubland and Inter-Mountain Basin mixed salt desert scrub. An additional 3,100 acres consists of Great Basin pinyon-juniper woodland, which has less than 15 percent of its total national extent protected in the National Wilderness Preservation System.

## Wilderness Characteristics

### *Degree the Area Generally Appears to be Affected Primarily by the Forces of Nature*

The polygon has moderate to high ecological integrity. The area reflects conditions that would normally be associated with the area absent human intervention moderately to very well. Invasive plant species are present, including cheat grass, halogeton, Russian thistle and sweet clover. Their populations are believed to be stable. Brook and rainbow trout were introduced into previously fishless waters. These self-sustaining populations have displaced endemic species. There is historic fish stocking. It is unknown if the Nevada Division of Wildlife still stocks. There is very little impact from humans within this area on wildlife. This area has limited habitat fragmentation and the connectivity between pinyon-juniper habitats and shrublands remains intact. It is characterized by a mostly natural fire regime. Leidy Creek and Indian Creek are perennial streams located along the perimeter of the polygon. Marble Creek, within the polygon, is an intermittent stream that flows into the summer. Riparian vegetation associated with the perennial and intermittent streams is in unknown condition. The condition of meadows is unknown. Grazing occurs in the area. Soil impacts due to legacy grazing and mining are highly localized. Soils are likely at desired condition. The air quality is excellent.

### *Opportunities for Solitude or Primitive and Unconfined Recreation*

There is steep terrain in the western portion of the polygon, but in the eastern portion it is relatively flat and open (down on alluvial fans). There is moderate opportunity for solitude and for primitive or unconfined recreation opportunities. In the lower eastern portion of the polygon, there is little opportunity due to exposure down on the alluvial fans. Development can be seen from this polygon (Fish Lake Valley, power lines, and Highway 264). From the area development (Fish Lake Valley, power lines and Highway 264) can be seen. The southwestern side of the polygon has steep terrain and opportunities for solitude. There is a private land development along Indian Creek on the northern boundary. There are lightly used roads along Indian Creek and Leidy Creek. There is low to moderate potential for encounter with other visitors. The area is largely undeveloped and there are likely opportunities for primitive-type recreation activities, such as cross-country hiking, hunting and general forest exploration with some degree of challenge due to the remoteness and terrain, particularly along the western portion of the polygon.

### *Other Features of Value*

No other features of value were noted.

## Manageability

There is private land development along Indian Creek on the northern boundary. The eastern boundary is Bureau of Land Management land. Green Monster Mine is located on private land in the western portion of the polygon, and was excluded from the White Mountain Wilderness. Management of Paiute cutthroat trout population, which is federally listed as threatened, requires road and equipment access. The population is within the White Mountains Wilderness, and the road access is along Leidy Creek, along the north perimeter of the polygon. Current uses in the area include grazing and guided hunting. There is one water right.

## Summary of Potential Suitability for Inclusion in the National Wilderness Preservation System

Fish stocking has occurred in the area and there are grazing allotments in the area. It is unknown if there are grazing improvements in the area. The area is believed to have moderate to high ecological integrity with some invasive plant species. This polygon presents a moderate

opportunity to protect ecological groups that may be minimally represented in the National Wilderness Preservation System. Ecological groups with less than 10 percent of their national extent in the National Wilderness Preservation System comprise 10,534 acres. An ecological group with less than 15 percent of its national extent in the National Wilderness Preservation System comprises an additional 3,100 acres. Visibility to private land development, power lines, and Highway 264 has the potential to impact the opportunity for solitude. Most of the area is free from motorized noise, especially along the western perimeter of the polygon. The northern and southern perimeters are bounded by lightly used roads. There may be opportunity for primitive and unconfined recreation. The polygon has the potential to be reshaped to include the western perimeter, adjacent to the White Mountains Wilderness. If that were to occur, it would need to include cherry-stem roads, which could make the polygon oddly shaped and management difficult. (For map see Exhibit A – Inyo National Forest Evaluation Maps – Evaluation Map C.)

## **Polygon 1311 (Chiatovich Creek)**

### **General Description**

Polygon 1311 (Chiatovich Creek) consists of 11,214 acres ranging in elevation from 5,200 to 9,700 feet. It is contiguous with the White Mountains Wilderness and is located on the east side of the White Mountains, between Middle Creek on the north and Indian Creek to the south, and includes Chiatovich Creek and Black Mountain at 9,704 feet in elevation. It is an oddly shaped polygon due to roads and a private land parcel that protrude into the polygon along the eastern edge. A cherry-stem road and private land parcel dissects the northern half of the polygon. The eastern perimeter follows the forest boundary, making for an irregularly shaped straight line boundary. The polygon intersects with the Boundary Peak Inventoried Roadless Area. Ecosystem types include mountain mahogany, pinyon-juniper, subalpine forest and xeric shrublands and blackbrush. The entire polygon is within a mapped wildfire restoration zone. It is a sage grouse priority habitat. The topography includes steep terrain in the western portion of the polygon, but in the eastern portion it is relatively flat and open (down on alluvial fans).

National Vegetation Classification System data indicates 37 percent of the area of the polygon (4,130 acres) consists of ecological groups that have less than 10 percent of their national extent protected in the National Wilderness Preservation System. The most prevalent is Inter-Mountain Basin montane sagebrush steppe. An additional 4,300 acres consists of Great Basin pinyon-juniper woodland, which has less than 15 percent of their national extent protected in the National Wilderness Preservation System.

### **Wilderness Characteristics**

#### *Degree the Area Generally Appears to be Affected Primarily by the Forces of Nature*

There are several documented cultural resources sites as well as ruins associated with both prehistoric settlement (rock rings and artifact scatters) and historic settlement (rock walls, depressions, trails, and structural remains). Public comments indicate range improvements (fences) may extend into the polygon.

The polygon has high ecological integrity. The area reflects conditions that would normally be associated with the area absent human intervention very well. Invasive plant species are present, including cheat grass which is likely increasing. Brook and rainbow trout were introduced into previously fishless waters. They are self-sustaining populations and have displaced endemic species. There was historic fish stocking. It is unknown if Nevada Division of Wildlife still stocks. There is very little impact from humans within this area on wildlife. This area has limited

habitat fragmentation and the connectivity between pinyon-juniper habitats and shrublands remains intact. It has a mostly natural fire regime. Chiatovich and Davis Creeks are perennial streams located within the polygon. Middle Creek and Indian Creek are perennial streams located along the perimeter of the polygon. Riparian vegetation associated with the perennial streams is in unknown condition. There is likely trampling from wild horses and livestock impacts mainly restricted to riparian areas outside the polygon, but condition is likely good. Condition of meadows is unknown. Soil impacts due to legacy grazing and mining are highly localized. Soils are likely at desired condition. The air quality is excellent.

#### *Opportunities for Solitude or Primitive and Unconfined Recreation*

There is steep terrain in the western portion of the polygon, but in the eastern portion it is relatively flat and open (down on alluvial fans). There are moderate opportunities for solitude and for primitive or unconfined recreation opportunities. In the lower eastern portion of the polygon, there is little opportunity due to exposure down on the alluvial fans. Development can be seen from this polygon (Fish Lake Valley, power lines and Highway 264). The western side of the polygon has steep terrain and opportunities for solitude. There are areas free from motorized noise, except in areas adjacent to private property (along Chiatovich Creek and Indian Creek) and lightly used roads and motorized trails in Middle, Chiatovich, Davis and Indian Creeks. There is low to moderate potential for encounter with other visitors, primarily around roads and motorized trails. The potential for encounters is low in winter months. There are likely opportunities for primitive-type recreation activities, including cross-country hiking, hunting and general forest exploration with some degree of challenge due to the remoteness and steep terrain, particularly along the western portion of the polygon.

#### *Other Features of Value*

The polygon is a sage grouse priority habitat and includes bristlecone pines. There are steep, scenic mountains in this area.

#### **Manageability**

There is a community development, White Mountain Estates and associated infrastructure along Middle Creek and Chiatovich Creek immediately adjacent to the forest boundary, and one private land parcel along Indian Creek (inholding within the forest boundary). There are regularly used roads and motorized trails, as well as the private land parcels that protrude into the area, creating an irregular shaped boundary along the eastern portion of the polygon. The area contains priority habitat for sage grouse, which may require active management. Existing uses include grazing and guided hunting. There are three water rights.

#### **Summary of Potential Suitability for Inclusion in the National Wilderness Preservation System**

There was fish stocking that occurred in the area and there are grazing allotments in the area. Few developments were noted, including remnants of a historic settlement (rock walls, depressions, trails, structural remains). It is unknown if there are grazing improvements in the area. The area is believed to have high ecological integrity with some invasive plant species and historic fish stocking which has altered native assemblages. This polygon presents a moderate opportunity to protect ecological groups that may be minimally represented in the National Wilderness Preservation System. Ecological groups with less than 10 percent of their national extent in the National Wilderness Preservation System comprise 4,130 acres. An ecological group with less than 15 percent of its national extent in the National Wilderness Preservation System comprises an additional 4,300 acres. The proximity to private land development, as well as regularly used

roads and motorized trails has the potential to impact the opportunity for solitude. However, much of the area is free from motorized noise. There may be opportunity for primitive and unconfined recreation. The polygon has the potential to be reshaped, adjacent to the White Mountains Wilderness, to exclude the areas near the private land development, although there may still be an irregularly shaped boundary due to the cherry-stem roads and motorized trails. (For map see Exhibit A – Inyo National Forest Evaluation Maps – Evaluation Map C.)

## **Polygon 1312 (Boundary Peak)**

### **General Description**

Polygon 1312 (Boundary Peak) consists of 8,133 acres with elevations ranging from 6,800 to 9,600 feet. It is contiguous with the Boundary Peak Wilderness and a small portion of the White Mountains Wilderness on the northwest corner. It is located on the east side of the White Mountains, east of the Boundary Peak Wilderness between Queen Valley on the north and Middle Creek to the south. The polygon is elongated horizontally, following the boundary with the Boundary Peak Wilderness. It is narrow in some places due to the road system, and there are a few roads that protrude into the polygon. The majority of the polygon intersects with the Boundary Peak Inventoried Roadless Area. Ecosystem types include mountain mahogany, pinyon-juniper and subalpine forest. The entire polygon is within a mapped wildfire restoration zone. The topography includes steep canyons along the northern and eastern sides of the White Mountains. There is steep terrain, especially south of Trail Canyon.

National Vegetation Classification System data indicates 29 percent of the area of the polygon (2,388 acres) consists of ecological groups that have less than 10 percent of their national extent protected in the National Wilderness Preservation System. The most prevalent is Inter-Mountain Basin montane sagebrush steppe. An additional 3,500 acres consists of Great Basin pinyon-juniper woodland, which has less than 15 percent of their national extent protected in the National Wilderness Preservation System.

### **Wilderness Characteristics**

#### *Degree the Area Generally Appears to be Affected Primarily by the Forces of Nature*

Grazing occurs in the area and there is historic mining. There was watershed restoration in meadows on Trail Creek that included meadow headcut treatments with filter cloth and rock. There is a dam on Trail Creek, historically used for mining but now used for recreation.

There are many old structures related to mining activity in the Queen Canyon area, which are substantially noticeable. The extent of remnant historic mining structures in the southern half of the polygon is unknown. There are likely mining sites near Red Rock Mine. There is a dam on Trail Creek that was historically used for mining, but is now used for recreation. The area remains largely unsurveyed for cultural resources. The few documented sites include two large historic mining centers with mill remains, foundations, stone structures, adits and mining and living refuse, as well as evidence of prehistoric occupation and use including bedrock mortars and lithics.

The polygon has high ecological integrity. The area reflects conditions that would normally be associated with the area absent human intervention moderately to very well. There has been some alteration to natural conditions from wild horses and livestock grazing. Invasive plant species are present. Cheatgrass is likely to occur in the area and populations are likely stable. Brook and rainbow trout were introduced into previously fishless waters. They are self-sustaining populations and have displaced endemic species. There has been historic fish stocking. There is

very little impact from humans within this area on wildlife. This area has limited habitat fragmentation and the connectivity between pinyon-juniper habitats and shrublands remains intact. It has a mostly natural fire regime. There are numerous perennial stream channels throughout the area including Trail Creek and Buffalo Creek. Dry Creek is a major intermittent channel. There are likely springs present. Riparian vegetation associated with the perennial and intermittent streams is in unknown condition. There is some trampling from wild horses and livestock impacts noted to riparian vegetation. Condition of meadows is unknown. There are soil impacts due to legacy grazing and mining are highly localized. Soils are likely at the desired condition. The air quality is excellent.

#### *Opportunities for Solitude or Primitive and Unconfined Recreation*

There are steep canyons along the north and east side of the White Mountains. There is steep terrain, especially south of Trail Canyon. There is good screening. Queen Canyon Road and mine area are likely visible from portions of the area on the northeastern side. There is moderate opportunity for solitude and for primitive or unconfined recreation opportunities. There are roads and motorized trails primarily along the northern and eastern sides of the polygon. Vehicles driving up Queen Canyon Road (the northern half is largely along slopes above the road) would likely affect opportunities for solitude. Trail Canyon Road and Trailhead provide access to the east side of Boundary Peak Wilderness. At current visitation amounts, the access road would minimally affect opportunities for solitude. Overall, with the exception of the portion of the polygon in proximity to Queen Canyon Road and for the light use on adjacent roads and motorized trails (Trail Canyon Road and Middle Creek), the area is free from motorized noise south of Trail Canyon. There is existing recreation use in the area related to the Boundary Peak Wilderness. Potential for encounters is low in most areas and medium during the summer and fall on the two trails accessing Boundary Peak, Trail Canyon and Queen Canyon. Most of the use is limited to the two trails approaching Boundary Peak, Queen Canyon route or Trail Canyon route, as well as visitors exploring the mine areas. There are opportunities for primitive-type recreation activities, including cross-country hiking, hunting and general forest exploration with some degree of challenge due to remoteness and steep terrain features.

#### *Other Features of Value*

The area includes bristlecone pine above Queen Canyon and is a sage grouse priority habitat. There are rare and distinctive plants, including fishhook cactus. It has variable geology, including granitics and volcanics, which form distinct visuals in Queen Canyon.

#### **Manageability**

This polygon is narrow, elongated strip (typically one mile wide) adjoining the Boundary Peak Wilderness. Most of the northern portion of the polygon is within one mile of Queen Canyon Road. The southern portion, south of Trail Canyon is generally more than one mile from a road and separated by a ridge as well. The polygon is irregularly shaped along the eastern perimeter due to cherry-stem roads. The cherry-stem road in Trail Canyon nearly splits the polygon in half. There are two motorized trails within the polygon. Old mining roads and mine ruins are scattered throughout the northern portion of the polygon. This is very evident in Queen Canyon. Old mining roads will remain on the landscape for hundreds of years unless rehabbed prior to designation. There is a major community development, White Mountain Estates, along Middle Creek, in the southeast, outside of the polygon and forest boundary. There is a small private land parcel to the northwest, Orchard Springs, outside of the polygon. The area contains priority habitat for sage grouse, which may require active management. Current uses in the area include

grazing and guided hunting. There are also wild horses in the area, which may require active management. There are six water rights.

### Summary of Potential Suitability for Inclusion in the National Wilderness Preservation System

Livestock grazing, historic mining and watershed treatments have affected the wilderness characteristics. There are many old structures related to historic mining in the Queen Canyon area in the northern portion of the polygon which are substantially noticeable and degrade the undeveloped quality. The area is believed to have high ecological integrity with some invasive plant species and some localized trampling from wild horses and livestock grazing in riparian areas. This polygon presents a moderate opportunity to protect ecological groups that may be minimally represented in the National Wilderness Preservation System. Ecological groups with less than 10 percent of their national extent in the National Wilderness Preservation System comprise 2,388 acres. An ecological group with less than 15 percent of its national extent in the National Wilderness Preservation System comprises an additional 3,500 acres. The proximity to roads and motorized trails primarily along the north and east side of the polygon limits the opportunity for solitude as it is affected by vehicles driving up Queen Canyon Road. Much of the area south of Trail Canyon is free from motorized noise except in proximity to roads and motorized trails. There may be opportunity for primitive and unconfined recreation. The polygon has the potential to be reshaped to exclude motorized trails and developments that are substantially noticeable, adjacent to Boundary Peak Wilderness, particularly south of Trail Canyon. The northern portion of the polygon is narrow, although it may have the potential to be reshaped in a few small areas. (For map see Exhibit A – Inyo National Forest Evaluation Maps – Evaluation Map C.)

### **Polygon 1326 (Queen Valley)**

#### General Description

Polygon 1326 (Queen Valley) consists of 5,464 acres with elevations ranging from 6,400 to 8,800 feet. It is located on the east side of the White Mountains, southeast of Highway 6, and includes Queen Valley, Sagehen Flat and Mustang Point at 9,689 feet in elevation. It is an oddly shaped polygon due to roads and private land parcels that protrude into the polygon. A portion of the polygon intersects with the Sugar Loaf Inventoried Roadless Area. Ecosystem types include pinyon-juniper, sagebrush and xeric shrublands and blackbrush. The area is a proposed critical habitat for sage grouse. The entire polygon is within a mapped wildfire restoration zone. It is White Mountain Horse Territory. Topography along the northwest side is moderate angle alluvial fans, leading to steep-walled canyon and 9,000 foot peaks on the east side.

National Vegetation Classification System data indicates 37 percent of the area of the polygon (2,027 acres) consists of ecological groups that have less than 10 percent of their national extent protected in the National Wilderness Preservation System. Each of these ecological groups, however, comprises less than 1,000 acres in this polygon. An additional 3,000 acres consists of Great Basin pinyon-juniper woodland, which has less than 15 percent of their national extent protected in the National Wilderness Preservation System.

#### Wilderness Characteristics

##### *Degree the Area Generally Appears to be Affected Primarily by the Forces of Nature*

A substantial amount of mining activity occurred in the area. There is evidence of many past mining activities with many structures in various states of disrepair. Historic mining ruins have

not been formally documented as cultural properties. There is an old stamp mill that is in good condition near Sugarloaf. Historic trash scatters and prehistoric lithic scatters are also present in the area. The United States Geological Survey map shows an aqueduct and pond.

This polygon has moderate ecological integrity. The area moderately reflects conditions that would normally be associated with the area absent human intervention. There has been some alteration to natural conditions from historic mining, wild horses and livestock grazing. Invasive plant species are present, including cheatgrass and halogeton, both of which are increasing. Wild horses are not native, but occur in the area. There are nonnative aquatic species (Gambusia fish and mosquito fish) in spring channels. This affects the natural endemic distribution of macro-invertebrate species. There is little surface water in the area, probably seasonal. There may be riparian vegetation in canyons and Brownie Creek, but the condition is unknown. There is likely some trampling from wild horses. There are site-specific soil impacts due to legacy mining and likely legacy grazing. The air quality is good.

#### *Opportunities for Solitude or Primitive and Unconfined Recreation*

There is moderate screening. Steep canyons limit view shed in some area; however, Highway 6 is visible from much of the area. Highway 6, Queen Valley Ranch (Hereford Valley Ranch), and roads are within 2-3 miles of most of the area. There are sights and sounds present from outside the area, especially along the western portion of the polygon, where the presence of Highway 6 is highly evident. The area is remote with very little recreation use. There is moderate opportunity for primitive or unconfined recreation activities, such as cross-country hiking and general forest exploration with some degree of challenge due to the remote location and rugged terrain, but it is not very attractive due to lack of water.

#### *Other Features of Value*

Sugarloaf is a unique geologic feature, but with gold mining attached to it. Although unique for the White Mountains, it is not unique for the Great Basin. The area includes a sensitive plant, *Mono phacelia* and is a sage grouse proposed critical habitat.

#### **Manageability**

The polygon has an irregularly shaped boundary due to the presence of private land parcels (Queen Valley Ranch and Montgomery Pass), as well as cherry-stem roads. Highway 6 is within a half mile of the polygon and highly visible from much of the area. The area contains priority habitat for sage grouse, which may require active management. There are no known water rights; however, the United States Geological Survey map shows an aqueduct and pond with levee.

#### **Summary of Potential Suitability for Inclusion in the National Wilderness Preservation System**

There are many old structures related to historic mining in the Sugarloaf and Queen Canyon area, which are substantially noticeable and degrade the undeveloped quality. The area is believed to have moderate ecological integrity with some alterations to natural conditions from mining, grazing, and wild horses. This polygon presents a moderate opportunity to protect ecological groups that may be minimally represented in the National Wilderness Preservation System. Ecological groups with less than 10 percent of their national extent in the National Wilderness Preservation System comprise 2,027 acres. An ecological group with less than 15 percent of its national extent in the National Wilderness Preservation System comprises an additional 3,000 acres. The proximity to Highway 6, which is visible from much of the area, lightly used road system, and private land development, impacts the opportunity for solitude. There may be

opportunity for primitive and unconfined recreation, but not much draw due to lack of water. The polygon has an irregularly shaped boundary, due to the location of private land parcels and short-spur cherry-stem roads, which would make management of this area for wilderness characteristics difficult. There is not the potential to reshape the polygon to make it more suitable or manageable for wilderness. (For map see Exhibit A – Inyo National Forest Evaluation Maps – Evaluation Map C.)

## **Polygon 1332 (Pizona South, Northwest of Highway 6)**

### **General Description**

Polygon 1332 (Pizona South, Northwest of Highway 6) consists of 5,244 acres with elevations ranging from 6,400 to 7,600 feet. It is located northwest of Highway 6 and southeast of Truman Meadows and includes West Queen Canyon. It is an oddly shaped polygon due to roads and a private land parcel that dissects the polygon and splits it nearly in half. The polygon is not within an inventoried roadless area. Ecosystem types include pinyon-juniper, sagebrush and xeric shrublands and blackbrush. It is a sage grouse priority habitat. The terrain includes steep south facing slopes with many short steep canyons.

National Vegetation Classification System data indicates 44 percent of the area of the polygon (2,300 acres) consists of ecological groups that have less than 10 percent of their national extent protected in the National Wilderness Preservation System. The most prevalent is Inter-Mountain Basin big sagebrush shrubland. An additional 2,800 acres consists of Great Basin pinyon-juniper woodland, which has less than 15 percent of its national extent protected in the National Wilderness Preservation System.

### **Wilderness Characteristics**

#### *Degree the Area Generally Appears to be Affected Primarily by the Forces of Nature*

Historic mining has taken place in this area. There has been pinyon pine removal. Some old chaining and disturbance activities were conducted by the military in the area. There are moderate developments mostly related to historic mining activity. Historic mining sites are substantially noticeable. It is within a wild horse management area (fences, corrals). Documented cultural properties include prehistoric rock rings, prospects and trash associated with historic mining activities. It appears that the tailing piles are abandoned. Cultural sites are being preserved in their current condition.

The polygon has moderate ecological integrity. Evidence of mining takes away from naturalness. Ecological conditions are impacted from mining and invasive plant species are present. Species composition and succession has been altered by mining activities. There is moderate impact to the plant communities. Invasive plant species are abundant, particularly on the south-facing slopes (cheatgrass and halogeton). There has been a departure from the natural fire regime in some places as evidenced by pinyon pine expansion. There is very little impact from humans within this area on wildlife. This area has limited habitat fragmentation and the connectivity between pinyon-juniper habitats and shrublands remains intact. There is little to no surface water, primarily ephemeral stream channels. Wild horses impact meadows and riparian areas. There are good soil conditions. Minor legacy impacts from grazing and mining are likely. There is good air quality, with likely limited impacts from Mono Basin to the west of this area.

### *Opportunities for Solitude or Primitive and Unconfined Recreation*

The opportunity for solitude is very limited due to the proximity to Highway 6 being within the view shed. Highway 6 looks down into this area and is highly visible and can be heard from within the area. Roads, highways or mining activities are within less than a mile in most of the area. There is low to moderate potential for encounters. The potential is lower in winter because snow and slippery soils on roads reduce access. There is opportunity for mineral prospecting. There may be opportunities for primitive and unconfined recreation, but it is limited.

### *Other Features of Value*

The area is a sage grouse priority habitat and it includes a sensitive plant species, *Mono phacelia*, which occurs at the polygon boundary.

### **Manageability**

This polygon has an irregularly shaped boundary due to private land and many short spur roads that protrude into the area, creating a narrow and irregular boundary, in some places no more than half mile from the edge. The area is surrounded by roads and also dissected by private land parcel. There is a moderate degree of permanent intrusions, mainly from mining exploratory activity and roads. There is a large parcel of private land to the northwest which protrudes into the area. The private landowner is unknown and the area is undeveloped. There may be patented mining claims. The area contains priority habitat for sage grouse, which may require active management. The area occurs within the Montgomery Wild Horse Management Area, which may require active management for wild horses, including fencing, corrals, and helicopter use.

### **Summary of Potential Suitability for Inclusion in the National Wilderness Preservation System**

This polygon is impacted by mining activities, as well as past vegetation management activities including pinyon pine removal. There are moderate developments related to mining activity, which are substantially noticeable and degrade the undeveloped quality. The area is believed to have moderate ecological integrity with some alterations to natural conditions from mining. This polygon presents a moderate opportunity to protect ecological groups that may be minimally represented in the National Wilderness Preservation System. Ecological groups with less than 10 percent of their national extent in the National Wilderness Preservation System comprise 2,300 acres. An ecological group with less than 15 percent of its national extent in the National Wilderness Preservation System comprises an additional 2,800 acres. The proximity to Highway 6, which is visible from much of the area, impacts the opportunity for solitude. There may be opportunity for primitive and unconfined recreation, but not much draw due to lack of water. The polygon has an irregularly shaped and narrow boundary due to the location of the private land parcel and short- spur cherry-stem roads. This would make management of this area for wilderness characteristics difficult. There is not the potential to reshape the polygon to make it more suitable or manageable for wilderness. (For map see Exhibit A – Inyo National Forest Evaluation Maps – Evaluation Map C.)

## **Polygon 1339 (Pizona–Truman Meadows)**

### **General Description**

The Polygon 1339 (Pizona-Truman Meadows) consists of 19,826 acres with elevations ranging from 6,000 to 8,000 feet. It is located on the east side of the White Mountains, southeast of Highway 6, and includes Queen Valley, Sagehen Flat and Mustang Point at 9,689 feet in elevation. The polygon has some oddly shaped boundaries due to roads that penetrate into the

area and the forest boundary. The majority of the polygon intersects with Excelsior Inventoried Roadless Area. Ecosystem types include pinyon-juniper, sagebrush and xeric shrublands and blackbrush. It is a sage grouse priority habitat. The topography includes moderate rolling hills, broad, open sagebrush flats, and ancient volcanic flows.

National Vegetation Classification System data indicates 35 percent of the area of the polygon (6,974 acres) consists of ecological groups that have less than 10 percent of their national extent protected in the National Wilderness Preservation System. The most prevalent are Inter-Mountain Basin big sagebrush shrubland and Inter-Mountain Basin montane sagebrush steppe. An additional 12,600 acres consists of Great Basin pinyon-juniper woodland, which has less than 15 percent of its national extent protected in the National Wilderness Preservation System.

## Wilderness Characteristics

### *Degree the Area Generally Appears to be Affected Primarily by the Forces of Nature*

There are mining claims and a recently authorized exploration plan of operation. Watershed treatments are present in Truman Meadow. There are some unnatural vegetation patterns (approximately 20 acre patches in grid pattern) evident on Google Earth and not obvious on the ground. Historically, there were military operations including constructing replica towns and burning them down.

There are some remnants of grazing improvements that are no longer functional, including a windmill. The allotments are closed. The area is within the wild horse management area (fences, corrals). Watershed treatments related to the road are present in Truman Meadow. They are not substantial, but noticeable when driving the road. There are a lot of historic sites in the area (remnant rock foundations, stage coach lines) as well as some prehistoric sites. The historic remains, if present, have not been formally documented as cultural sites and their condition is unknown.

This polygon has high ecological integrity. The area moderately reflects conditions that would normally be associated with an area absent of human intervention. There has been a moderate impact to the plant communities, including the presence of some cheatgrass, but it is stable. There is a departure from natural fire regime in some places as evidenced by pinyon pine expansion. There is very little impact from humans within this area on wildlife. This area has limited habitat fragmentation and the connectivity between pinyon-juniper habitats and shrublands remains intact. There are nonnative aquatic species (Gambusia fish, mosquito fish) in spring channels. This affects the natural endemic distribution of macro-invertebrate species. There are springs and canyons that have surface water, as well as riparian vegetation associated with springs. Their condition is unknown. Wild horses impact meadows and riparian areas. Truman Meadow is stable. Work was completed on the road through the meadow to stabilize wet areas. There are good soil conditions, with likely minor legacy impacts from grazing and mining. The air quality is likely influenced by dust from Mono Basin to the west of this area. Mono Basin is in Non-attainment PM-10.

### *Opportunities for Solitude or Primitive and Unconfined Recreation*

There is some screening present due to topography and vegetation. There is visibility down to Highway 6 from many parts of this polygon. Power lines are adjacent to part of the western border. Sights and sounds from outside the area are minimal, with some lightly used roads adjacent to some borders. There is one motorized trail that is a short segment on the eastern edge that accesses Truman Springs. It provides access to a popular dispersed campsite. In addition,

there are some motorized routes that are being used, and are being considered for addition to the forest's trail system. There is a low potential for encounters in the area. Although limited by the lack of water, there are likely opportunities for primitive-type recreation activities, including cross-country hiking, hunting, wild horse viewing and general forest exploration with some degree of challenge due to the remote location and rugged terrain.

#### *Other Features of Value*

The area includes dry alkali flats, which is a unique ecosystem type to the Inyo National Forest, and Great Basin springs. Wild horses occur in the area and there is sage grouse priority habitat. The rare plant, Parish's popcorn flower, grows within the polygon. There is a rare meadow feature for the area (Truman Meadow). One significant prehistoric site has been formally documented in the area.

#### **Manageability**

The polygon has an irregularly shaped boundary due to short spur roads that protrude into the polygon and the forest boundary. Some small parcels of non-Federal land are adjacent or along the border of the area (McBride Spring, Truman Meadows). The area contains priority habitat for sage grouse, which may require active management. The area occurs within the Montgomery Wild Horse Management Area, which may require active management for wild horses, including fencing, corrals and helicopter use. Existing uses of the Federal land in the area includes authorized outfitting and guiding related to wild horses, mineral exploration, and dispersed recreation (roads and motorized trails, camping). There is one motorized trail which is a short segment on the eastern edge that accesses Truman Springs and provides access to popular dispersed campsite and for outfitting and guiding. In addition, there are some motorized routes that are being used and are being considered for addition to the forest's trail system. There are mining claims and an exploration plan of operation was recently authorized.

#### **Summary of Potential Suitability for Inclusion in the National Wilderness Preservation System**

The wilderness characteristics are impacted by mining activities, as well as past vegetation management activities believed to be conducted by the military. There are developments related to historic sites, as well as grazing and wild horse management. The area is believed to have high ecological integrity with some alterations to natural conditions. This polygon presents an opportunity to protect ecological groups that may be minimally represented in the National Wilderness Preservation System. Ecological groups with less than 10 percent of their national extent in the National Wilderness Preservation System comprise 6,974 acres. An ecological group with less than 15 percent of its national extent in the National Wilderness Preservation System comprises an additional 12,600 acres. Highway 6 is visible from parts of the area and power lines are visible along the western perimeter, which impacts the opportunity for solitude. However, sights and sounds are minimal throughout the remotest parts of the area. There may be opportunity for primitive and unconfined recreation, but it is likely limited by the lack of available water. The polygon has an irregular Y-shaped boundary due to the location of short spur cherry-stem roads and the forest boundary. Due to the Y-shaped boundary, there is not much potential to reshape the polygon to make it more suitable or manageable for wilderness. (For map see Exhibit A – Inyo National Forest Evaluation Maps – Evaluation Map B.)

## **Polygon 1342 (Montgomery Pass)**

### **General Description**

Polygon 1342 (Montgomery Pass) consists of 6,144 acres with elevations ranging from 6,600 to 7,200 feet. It is located on the east side of the White Mountains, southeast of Highway 6 and east of Montgomery Pass. The polygon has oddly shaped boundaries due to roads and a private land parcel that protrudes into the area. The area does not intersect with inventoried roadless area. Ecosystem types include pinyon-juniper and xeric shrublands and blackbrush. It is a sage grouse priority habitat and is part of the Montgomery Wild Horse Management Area.

National Vegetation Classification System data indicates thirty-5 percent of the area of the polygon (2,173 acres) consists of ecological groups that have less than 10 percent of their national extent protected in the National Wilderness Preservation System. The most prevalent is Inter-Mountain Basin big sagebrush shrubland. An additional 3,300 acres consists of Great Basin pinyon-juniper woodland, which has less than 15 percent of its national extent protected in the National Wilderness Preservation System.

### **Wilderness Characteristics**

#### *Degree the Area Generally Appears to be Affected Primarily by the Forces of Nature*

Mining was a prominent activity at one time here and remnants of mining are evident. The area remains largely unsurveyed for cultural resources. The few documented properties include prehistoric rock ring and lithic scatter sites. Historically there has been grazing in this area.

The polygon has moderate ecological integrity. The area moderately reflects conditions that would normally be associated with an area absent of human intervention. There is moderate impact to the plant communities with cheatgrass and halogeton present and likely increasing. There is a departure from natural fire regime in some places as evidenced by pinyon pine expansion. There is very little impact from humans within this area on wildlife, except along the western perimeter where the polygon is dissected by a motorized trail. This area has limited habitat fragmentation and the connectivity between pinyon-juniper habitats and shrublands remains intact. There are nonnative aquatic species (*Gambusia* fish, mosquito fish) in spring channels that affect the natural endemic distribution of macro-invertebrate species. There is limited surface water and it is seasonal in nature. There may be riparian vegetation in the canyons, with its condition unknown. There are no meadows. Soils are likely at desired condition.

#### *Opportunities for Solitude or Primitive and Unconfined Recreation*

The polygon is surrounded by roads and private development. A gypsum mine is visible. Highway 6 is located in proximity to the northwestern boundary. There is visibility down to Highway 6 from many parts of this polygon. The remotest parts of the polygon would be one mile from nearest roads and developments. There is one cherry-stem road and motorized trail that protrudes into the polygon along the eastern boundary. In addition, there are some motorized routes that are being used, and are being considered for addition to the forest's trail system. There is a moderate potential for encounters in the area. There may be opportunities for primitive-type recreation activities, including cross-country hiking, hunting and general forest exploration.

#### *Other Features of Value*

The area is a sage grouse priority habitat, including habitat surrounding a breeding area. The area includes the sensitive plant, Mono *phacelia* and the rare sagebrush cholla.

## Manageability

The polygon has an irregularly shaped boundary due to private land parcel and short spur roads that protrude into the polygon. It is elongated north to south and is generally less than three miles across. There is one large parcel of non-Federal land along the western border of the area (Montgomery Pass). The area contains priority habitat for sage grouse, which may require active management. The polygon occurs within the Montgomery Wild Horse Management Area, which may require active management for wild horses, including fencing, corrals and helicopter use. There is one motorized trail in the northeastern corner of the polygon. In addition, there are some motorized routes that are being used, and are being considered for addition to the forest's trail system.

## Summary of Potential Suitability for Inclusion in the National Wilderness Preservation System

Grazing occurred in this area historically. There are developments related to historic mining. The area is believed to have moderate ecological integrity with some alterations to natural conditions. This polygon presents a moderate opportunity to protect ecological groups that may be minimally represented in the National Wilderness Preservation System. Ecological groups with less than 10 percent of their national extent in the National Wilderness Preservation System comprise 2,173 acres. An ecological group with less than 15 percent of its national extent in the National Wilderness Preservation System comprises an additional 3,300 acres. The area is bounded by roads and Highway 6 is visible from parts of the area, impacting the opportunity for solitude. The remotest parts of the area are approximately one mile from the road system. There may be opportunity for primitive and unconfined recreation, but it is likely limited by the lack of available water. The polygon has an elongated (north to south) and irregularly shaped boundary due to the location of the private land parcel and the road system (including cherry-stem roads). Due to the elongated and narrow shape, there is not much potential to reshape the polygon to make it more suitable or manageable for wilderness. (For map see Exhibit A – Inyo National Forest Evaluation Maps – Evaluation Map C.)

## **Polygon 1355 (Excelsior Mountains- Adobe Hills)**

### General Description

Polygon 1355 (Excelsior Mountains-Adobe Hills) consists of 10,297 acres with elevations ranging from 7,200 to 7,600 feet. It is located in the Excelsior Mountains, north of Adobe Lake, within the Adobe Hills. There is nothing notable about the polygon shape, except that it is drawn to the forest boundary and the California-Nevada state line. The majority of the polygon intersects with Excelsior and Huntoon Inventoried Roadless Areas. Ecosystem types include pinyon-juniper, sagebrush and xeric shrublands and blackbrush. The topography consists of low rolling hills mostly comprised of pinyon woodland and shrublands.

National Vegetation Classification System data indicates 31 percent of the area of the polygon (3,165 acres) consists of ecological groups that have less than 10 percent of their national extent protected in the National Wilderness Preservation System. The most prevalent is Inter-Mountain Basin big sagebrush shrubland. An additional 7,100 acres consists of Great Basin pinyon-juniper woodland, which has less than 15 percent of its national extent protected in the National Wilderness Preservation System.

## Wilderness Characteristics

### *Degree the Area Generally Appears to be Affected Primarily by the Forces of Nature*

The polygon, comprised largely of pinyon-juniper woodland, has high ecological integrity. The area moderately reflects conditions that would normally be associated with an area absent of human intervention. There is minimal impact to the plant communities and there are relatively few invasive plant species. There is a departure from natural fire regime in some places as evidenced by pinyon pine expansion. There is very little impact from humans within this area on wildlife. This area has limited habitat fragmentation and the connectivity between pinyon-juniper habitats and shrublands remains intact. There are no grazing allotments in this area. The area does overlap the Montgomery Wild Horse Territory. There is a departure from natural conditions due to the presence of wild horses. Wild horses have expanded heavily into this area. Their effects are not natural in this ecosystem. There is limited water with a few intermittent and ephemeral stream channels. These are of unknown condition. Soils are likely at desired condition. The air quality is good; likely due to dust from Mono Basin. Mono Basin is Non-attainment for PM-10. No cultural resources have been formally documented to date but the area is largely unsurveyed.

### *Opportunities for Solitude or Primitive and Unconfined Recreation*

The area is very remote with the potential for good solitude. The power line corridor would be visible from some of the area due to minimal topographic relief. Visitors would also be able to hear traffic from the roads. There is some visibility down to Highways 6 and 120 from parts of this polygon. There is a high opportunity to engage in primitive or unconfined recreation activities, including cross-country hiking, hunting, wild horse viewing, and general forest exploration with some degree of challenge due to the remote location. Currently, the area has low recreation use due to remoteness of the area and limited water. There is lower use in winter.

### *Other Features of Value*

There are dry alkali lakes, a unique ecosystem type to the Inyo National Forest. There are some sand dunes in this polygon, a unique geologic feature, with two rare but not sensitive plant species: globe spring parsley, and dune horse brush. Wild horses are found in the area. There is likely a nice view of Mono Lake from top of Adobe Hills.

## Manageability

Little was noted about the shape of the polygon that would affect manageability. The polygon is primarily bordered by Federal land (Inyo National Forest, Humboldt-Toiyabe National Forests and Bureau of Land Management). The area is bounded by roads along the northern, western and southern perimeters and the forest boundary along the eastern perimeter and a portion of the southern perimeter. There is also a transmission line along the western perimeter. The area occurs within the Montgomery Wild Horse Management Area, which may require active management for wild horses, including fencing, corrals and helicopter use. This area is adjacent to an inventoried roadless area on the Humboldt-Toiyabe National Forests.

## Summary of Potential Suitability for Inclusion in the National Wilderness Preservation System

The area is believed to have high ecological integrity with few alterations to natural conditions. This polygon presents a moderate opportunity to protect ecological groups that may be minimally represented in the National Wilderness Preservation System. Highways and transmission lines are visible from the polygon. Managing the polygon to preserve its wilderness characteristics would be affected by overlap with the Montgomery Wild Horse Management Area: management

includes fencing, corrals, and potential helicopter use. There are also limited opportunities to redraw the polygon boundary based on topographic features away from roads or the power line. Ecological groups with less than 10 percent of their national extent in the National Wilderness Preservation System comprise 3,165 acres. An ecological group with less than 15 percent of its national extent in the National Wilderness Preservation System comprises an additional 7,100 acres. The polygon is bounded by lightly traveled roads and a power line corridor; however, the area is remote and has good potential for solitude. There may be opportunity for primitive and unconfined recreation, but it is likely limited by the lack of available water. (For map see Exhibit A – Inyo National Forest Evaluation Maps – Evaluation Map B.)

## **Polygon 1357 (Excelsior Mountains)**

### **General Description**

Polygon 1357 (Excelsior Mountains) consists of 5,805 acres with elevations ranging from 7,000 to 7,500 feet. It is located in the Excelsior Mountains, north of Adobe Hills. The polygon is somewhat narrow and elongated. The majority of the polygon intersects with Excelsior Inventoried Roadless Area. Ecosystem types include pinyon-juniper, sagebrush and xeric shrublands and blackbrush. It includes part of the Montgomery Wild Horse Management Area. The topography is characterized by low rolling hills mostly comprised of pinyon woodland and shrublands.

National Vegetation Classification System data indicates 52 percent of the area of the polygon (3,030 acres) consists of ecological groups that have less than 10 percent of their national extent protected in the National Wilderness Preservation System. The most prevalent is Inter-Mountain Basin big sagebrush shrubland. An additional 2,800 acres consists of Great Basin pinyon-juniper, which has less than 15 percent of its national extent protected in the National Wilderness Preservation System.

### **Wilderness Characteristics**

#### *Degree the Area Generally Appears to be Affected Primarily by the Forces of Nature*

The polygon has high ecological integrity. The area moderately reflects conditions that would normally be associated with an area absent of human intervention. There is a departure from natural fire regime in some places as evidenced by pinyon pine expansion. There is very little impact from humans within this area on wildlife. This area has limited habitat fragmentation and the connectivity between pinyon-juniper habitats and shrublands remains intact. There are no grazing allotments in this area. The area does overlap the Montgomery Wild Horse Territory. There is a departure from natural conditions due to the presence of wild horses. Wild horses have expanded heavily into this area. Their effects are not natural in this ecosystem. There is limited water. No meadows or riparian areas are known. Soils are likely at desired condition. The air quality is good but may be affected by dust from Mono Basin. Mono Basin is nonattainment for pm10. The area remains largely unsurveyed for cultural resources, but there is a documented prehistoric site.

#### *Opportunities for Solitude or Primitive and Unconfined Recreation*

There is moderate screening. The power line corridor would be visible from some of the area due to minimal topographic relief. Visitors would also be able to hear traffic from the roads. The interior of the polygon is within one mile of roads, which surround the polygon on all sides. There is a high opportunity to engage in primitive or unconfined recreation activities, including cross-country hiking, hunting, wild horse viewing and general forest exploration with some

degree of challenge due to the remote location. Currently, the area has low recreation use due to remoteness of the area and limited water. There is lower use in winter.

#### *Other Features of Value*

There are dry alkali lakes which are a unique ecosystem type to the Inyo National Forest. Populations of two different Forest Service sensitive species, Williams combleaf and Long Valley milkvetch, are found here. Wild horses inhabit the area. There are unique and interesting views to the dry lakebeds of Adobe Valley.

#### **Manageability**

The polygon is elongated and narrow and surrounded by a road system. The interior of the polygon is generally less than a mile from a road. There is also a transmission line along the western perimeter. The area occurs within the Montgomery Wild Horse Management Area, which may require active management for wild horses, including fencing, corrals and helicopter use.

#### **Summary of Potential Suitability for Inclusion in the National Wilderness Preservation System**

The area is believed to have high ecological integrity with few alterations to natural conditions. This polygon presents a moderate opportunity to protect ecological groups that may be minimally represented in the National Wilderness Preservation System. Ecological groups with less than 10 percent of their national extent in the National Wilderness Preservation System comprise 3,030 acres. An ecological group with less than 15 percent of its national extent in the National Wilderness Preservation System comprises an additional 2,800 acres. The area is bounded roads and a power line corridor. From the interior of the polygon, the area is generally less than one mile from a road, which limits the opportunity for solitude. There may be opportunity for primitive and unconfined recreation, but it is likely limited by the lack of available water. The polygon has an elongated shape (northwest to southeast) and is surrounded by a road system. There is a power line corridor to the southwest. Due to the elongated and narrow shape, there is not much potential to reshape the polygon to make it more suitable or manageable for wilderness. (For map see Exhibit A – Inyo National Forest Evaluation Maps – Evaluation Map B.)

### **Polygon 1361 (Excelsior Mountains–Huntoon Creek)**

#### **General Description**

Polygon 1361 (Excelsior Mountain-Huntoon Creek) consists of 8,855 acres with elevations ranging from 7,200 to 7,800 feet. It is located in the Excelsior Mountains and includes Huntoon Creek. The polygon is somewhat narrow and elongated and follows forest boundary and the California-Nevada state line. The majority of the polygon intersects with Excelsior and Excelsior Mountains Inventoried Roadless Areas. Ecosystem types include pinyon-juniper, sagebrush and xeric shrublands and blackbrush. It is a sage grouse priority habitat. The topography is characterized by low rolling hills mostly comprised of pinyon woodland and shrublands.

National Vegetation Classification System data indicates 35 percent of the area of the polygon (3,066 acres) consists of ecological groups that have less than 10 percent of their national extent protected in the National Wilderness Preservation System. The most prevalent is Inter-Mountain Basin big sagebrush shrubland. An additional 5,700 acres consists of Great Basin pinyon-juniper woodland, which has less than 15 percent of its national extent protected in the National Wilderness Preservation System.

## Wilderness Characteristics

### *Degree the Area Generally Appears to be Affected Primarily by the Forces of Nature*

This polygon has high ecological integrity. The area reflects conditions that would normally be associated with an area absent of human intervention. There is little departure from natural fire regime. There is very little impact from humans within this area on wildlife. This area has limited habitat fragmentation and the connectivity between pinyon-juniper habitats and shrublands remains intact. There are no grazing allotments in this area. The area does overlap the Montgomery Wild Horse Territory. There is a departure from natural conditions due to the presence of wild horses. Wild horses have expanded heavily into this area. Their effects are not natural in this ecosystem. There is limited water. Huntoon Creek is an intermittent stream that flows through the area. There are no meadows and there are limited or no riparian areas present. Soils are likely at desired condition. The air quality is good but may be affected by dust from Mono Basin. Mono Basin is nonattainment for pm10. This area remains largely unsurveyed for cultural resources. Documented sites include one prehistoric lithic scatter and one historic mining site (tailing piles).

### *Opportunities for Solitude or Primitive and Unconfined Recreation*

This polygon is very remote, with the potential for good solitude. There is moderate screening. The power line corridor may be visible from some of the area. Visitors may also be able to hear traffic from the roads that are located along the northern, western and southern perimeters. There is a high opportunity to engage in primitive or unconfined recreation activities, including cross-country hiking, hunting, wild horse viewing and general forest exploration with some degree of challenge due to the remote location. Currently, the area has low recreation use due to remoteness of the area and limited water. There is lower use in winter.

### *Other Features of Value*

The area is a sage grouse priority habitat.

## Manageability

Little was noted about the shape of the polygon that would affect manageability. The polygon is somewhat narrow and elongated, particularly the southeastern half, due to the forest boundary. The polygon is primarily bordered by Federal land (Inyo National Forest, Humboldt-Toiyabe National Forests, and the Bureau of Land Management). The area is bounded by roads along the northern, western and southern perimeters and the forest boundary along the eastern perimeter. There is also a transmission line along the western perimeter. There is one private land inholding (40-acre parcel) in the southwestern corner of the polygon. The land owner is unknown, as is access to the private land parcel. The area occurs within the Montgomery Wild Horse Management Area, which may require active management for wild horses, including fencing, corrals and helicopter use. The area contains priority habitat for sage grouse, which may require active management. This area is adjacent to an inventoried roadless area on the Humboldt-Toiyabe National Forests.

## Summary of Potential Suitability for Inclusion in the National Wilderness Preservation System

The area is believed to have high ecological integrity. This polygon presents a moderate opportunity to protect ecological groups that may be minimally represented in the National Wilderness Preservation System. Ecological groups with less than 10 percent of their national extent in the National Wilderness Preservation System comprise 3,066 acres. An ecological group

with less than 15 percent of its national extent in the National Wilderness Preservation System comprises an additional 5,700 acres. Opportunities for solitude may be limited by Forest system roads along the periphery, and transmission lines that are visible from within the polygon. Managing the polygon to preserve its wilderness characteristics would be affected by overlap with the Montgomery Wild Horse Management Area: management actions include fencing, corrals, and potential helicopter use. There may be opportunity for primitive and unconfined recreation, but it is likely limited by the lack of available water. There may be the potential to reshape this polygon to make it suitable or manageable for wilderness character, although it is limited by the forest boundary. (For map see Exhibit A – Inyo National Forest Evaluation Maps – Evaluation Map B.)

## **Polygon 1376 (Watterson Meadow and Benton Range)**

### **General Description**

Polygon 1376 consists of 9,922 acres with elevations ranging from 6,800 to 8,000 feet. It is located within the Benton Range, east of Banner Ridge and includes Watterson Meadow. Roads and a private land parcel protrude into the polygon, making it oddly shaped. The polygon is bisected by motorized trails, which run east to west through the middle of the polygon. It is bounded by the forest boundary with Bureau of Land Management on the northern and eastern sides. The polygon intersects with the Benton Range Inventoried Roadless Area. Ecosystem types include pinyon-juniper, sagebrush and xeric shrublands and blackbrush. It is within priority habitat for sage grouse. The topography includes broad, open sage flats with rocky-topped ridges and exposed granite faces. The area contains pinyon pine and sage brush. Water is limited. Kelty Canyon runs through the far northwest part of this unit and likely runs water all year. There are many prominent intermittent stream channels.

National Vegetation Classification System data indicates 15 percent of the area of the polygon (1,499 acres) consists of ecological groups that have less than 10 percent of their national extent protected in the National Wilderness Preservation System. None of these ecological groups, however, comprise at least 1,000 acres in this polygon.

### **Wilderness Characteristics**

#### *Degree the Area Generally Appears to be Affected Primarily by the Forces of Nature*

There appear to be mining sites. The United States Geological Survey map indicates prospects, tunnels, and shafts in the vicinity, mostly around the perimeter, and accessed by motorized trails and roads. There is a grazing allotment (sheep grazing since 2010, but previously cattle) in the area, and there are fences and a windmill. There is a popular climbing area near Wildrose Summit with permanent anchors. The area is largely unsurveyed for cultural resources; however there are prehistoric lithic scatters, rock rings, a rock shelter, milling features and historic refuse known to exist in the area.

Overall, the area is believed to have high ecological integrity. There are few invasive plant species, which are stable. Some alteration from past use was noted, due to adjacency to Wildrose Canyon, and access from drainages to east. There are likely legacy grazing impacts, and these are likely highly localized. Overall, there have been limited management activities in this area. The condition of meadow and riparian areas is unknown. A mapped meadow is present in Kelty Canyon in unknown condition and riparian vegetation is present in canyons throughout this area in unknown condition. The air quality is excellent. There was some pinyon pine expansion areas

noted, which could indicate a departure from natural fire regime due to fire suppression. This appeared to be negligible.

#### *Opportunities for Solitude or Primitive and Unconfined Recreation*

The topography is highly variable, but generally includes broad, open sage flats with rocky-topped ridges and exposed granite faces. Topography and vegetation provide screening and the distance from impacts and developments is one to three miles from road systems, Benton Crossing Road and Highway 120 (the northwestern boundary is Benton Crossing Road). From much of the area, paved or unpaved roads, power lines and highways can be seen in mid-distance. The potential for encounters with other users is low within the interior and moderate around the perimeter and climbing area. Motorized trails bisect the polygon in the middle. There are several roads and a private land parcel that penetrate the perimeter of the polygon. The proximity to roads and motorized trails, as well as the visibility to developments, limits the opportunity for solitude. Nothing was noted related to primitive and unconfined recreation, except that there is a popular climbing area with permanent anchors. There are likely opportunities for primitive-type recreation activities, including cross-country hiking and general forest exploration with some degree of challenge due to rugged terrain.

#### *Other Features of Value*

The area has outstanding views of the White Mountains and unique granite faces and high rocky outcrops.

#### **Manageability**

The polygon is irregularly shaped, with a few cherry-stem roads and a private land parcel that protrudes into the area at several locations. The northern and eastern boundaries are the straight line forest boundary with Bureau of Land Management. The northwestern boundary is the Benton Crossing Road. There is a motorized trail that runs east to west into the central portion of the polygon. The area contains priority habitat for sage grouse, which may require active management.

#### **Summary of Potential Suitability for Inclusion in the National Wilderness Preservation System**

There were some developments identified that could degrade the undeveloped quality, including grazing infrastructure and mining features. Overall the area has high ecological integrity. This polygon presents a limited opportunity to protect ecological groups that may be minimally represented in the National Wilderness Preservation System. Ecological groups with less than 10 percent of their national extent in the National Wilderness Preservation System comprise 1,499 acres. Opportunities for solitude are limited by the proximity to roads, motorized trails and visibility to developments. There are opportunities for solitude and primitive and unconfined recreation. The polygon is irregularly shaped, with roads and a private land parcel that protrude into the polygon at several locations, which makes the polygon narrow in some places. In addition, there is a motorized trail in the central portion of the polygon. Because of the proximity to the road and motorized trail system, including the road system on adjacent Bureau of Land Management lands, there is not the opportunity to reshape the polygon to make it more suitable or manageable for wilderness character. (For map see Exhibit A – Inyo National Forest Evaluation Maps – Evaluation Map B.)

## **Polygon 1391 (Monache, Blackrock and South Sierra East)**

### **General Description**

Polygon 1391 (Monache, Blackrock and South Sierra East) consists of 51,033 acres with elevations ranging from 4,500 to 9,400 feet. This U-shaped polygon, connected by a narrow sliver that follows the Kennedy Meadows Road along the southern boundary, includes two distinct geographic areas divided by the South Sierra Wilderness. The western portion of the polygon includes the Monache and Blackrock area. The eastern portion of the polygon, located east of the South Sierra Wilderness, will be referred to as South Sierra East. This polygon crosses the forest boundary between the Sequoia National Forest and the Inyo National Forest. The polygon was evaluated as one whole unit containing the portions on both forests.

Monache and Blackrock, the northwest corner, is contiguous to the Golden Trout Wilderness and the eastern boundary is contiguous with the South Sierra Wilderness. It is located in the Monache area, between Monache Cabin on the north and Blackrock on the south. This portion of the polygon is irregularly shaped due to cherry-stem roads that protrude well into the polygon, splitting the polygon nearly in half in some places, particularly the cherry-stem road in the southern half of the polygon. There are also motorized trails present within the polygon, particularly in the southern half. The northern portion of the polygon intersects with the South Sierra Inventoried Roadless Area. Ecosystem types include red fir, sagebrush, subalpine forest and white fir. The topography includes gentle to moderate slopes.

South Sierra East, the southwest corner is contiguous to the Sacatar Trail Wilderness (Bureau of Land Management) and the western boundary is contiguous with the South Sierra Wilderness. Located east of the South Sierra Wilderness, the area includes Olancho Trailhead, Haiwee Pass Trailhead, Talus Canyon, Long Canyon, Tunawee Canyon and Kennedy Meadows Trailhead. The polygon is elongated horizontally, following the boundary of the existing wilderness. The northern portion near Olancho and the southern portion near Kennedy Meadows are narrow due to the buffer between the road and existing wilderness boundary. The majority of the polygon intersects with the South Sierra Inventoried Roadless Area. Ecosystem types include Jeffrey pine, mountain mahogany, pinyon-juniper, sagebrush, white fir and xeric shrublands and blackbrush. The topography is characterized as Eastern Sierra escarpment with steep slopes and forested canyons.

National Vegetation Classification System data indicates 14 percent of the area of the polygon (3,556 acres) consists of an ecological group, Inter-Mountain Basin big sagebrush shrubland, which has less than 10 percent of its national extent protected in the National Wilderness Preservation System. An additional 14,000 acres consists of Great Basin pinyon-juniper woodland and Rocky Mountain aspen forest and woodland, which have less than 15 percent of their national extent protected in the National Wilderness Preservation System.

### **Wilderness Characteristics**

#### *Degree the Area Generally Appears to be Affected Primarily by the Forces of Nature*

Grazing occurs in the Monache area and there has been some headcut and stream improvement work completed. Grazing also occurs at lower elevations in the eastern portion of the polygon.

Within the Monache and Blackrock area, there is a 75-yard wooden causeway on motorized trail 35E401. There are range improvements, including pasture fences in the Soda Creek area. Drift fences south of Summers Ridge may be in the area. Two spring boxes south of the Monache guard station may be in the area. Roughly 20 percent of the area has been surveyed for cultural

resources and more than 30 properties have been documented, which include prehistoric artifact scatters and one historic debris scatter.

There are recreation developments in the eastern portion of the polygon. A portion of Olancha Pass Trailhead parking and stock holding corral may be within the boundary. There is a spring box and water system for Kennedy Meadows Campground and existing dirt road access to Wildrose Trailhead. There is dispersed camping and a dirt parking area at the trailhead. There are range improvements within the polygon. There is drift fence at the Olancha Pass Trailhead area, Wildrose Trail, and Pacific Crest Trail north of Kennedy Meadows campground. The Los Angeles Department of Water and Power has infrastructure in Haiwee Canyon. Very little of the area has been surveyed. Fewer than 10 properties are known, including remains of a historic corral, historic ditch, historic refuse scatters, and numerous prehistoric artifacts scatters and milling stations.

The Monache and Blackrock portion of the polygon west of the South Sierra Wilderness has moderate ecological integrity. The area moderately reflects conditions that would normally be associated with an area absent of human intervention. There is moderate impact to plant communities. The area is mostly unsurveyed for invasive plant species. There is very little impact from humans within this area on wildlife. The area does provide contiguous wildlife habitat. There are perennial (mostly) channels including Soda Creek and Snake Creek, and springs and meadows are present throughout the area. There are legacy and current grazing impacts (trampling from grazing) along with off highway vehicle impacts. Compaction in meadows and the sod layer appears to be less than desired condition in several meadows. Hummocks are present in wet and spring areas. Vegetation is in good to excellent condition. The air quality is nonattainment for ozone (Tulare County).

The portion of the polygon located east of the South Sierra Wilderness has high ecological integrity. The area reflects conditions that would normally be associated with an area absent of human intervention. There are minimal impacts to plant communities; moderate in drainages at low elevations. There is some cheatgrass. Fires appear to be occurring within natural fire regime. There have been recent fires, but not too large or severe. There is very little impact on wildlife from humans within this area. The area does provide contiguous wildlife habitat. Perennial streams include Hogback Creek, Haiwee Creek and Talus Canyon. Riparian areas contain canyon live oak and are in good condition. There was fire (Clover Fire in 2008) and a flood event (2010) that impacted Haiwee Canyon. This polygon contains true Mojave desert ecosystems which are largely intact including Joshua trees, cholla cactus, creosote, plus healthy canyon live oak ecosystems and pinyon-juniper.

#### *Opportunities for Solitude or Primitive and Unconfined Recreation*

Within the western portion of the polygon (Monache and Blackrock), the topography is gentle to moderate slopes. There is some screening from trees and topography, but a portion of the area is bordered by popular roads and there are motorized trails in the area. The Monache area is a multiple use recreation area, popular for off highway vehicle recreation and dispersed camping, primarily during the summer and fall months. The area is also popular for hunting during the fall months. The occasional to frequent off highway vehicle traffic limits the opportunity for solitude in the area. There is no area free from motorized noise in the southern, eastern and northern portions of the polygon. There may be an area free from motorized noise in the western portion, adjacent to the Golden Trout Wilderness. The potential for encounters with other visitors is low to medium, with most of the use focused around roads, trails and the river corridor. Current primitive recreation activities in this area include: hiking, backpacking and horseback riding on

one forest system trail that accesses the Golden Trout Wilderness; fishing on the South Fork Kern River and deer hunting in the fall. The degree of challenge is similar to the adjacent wilderness. There are some opportunities for wildlife observation, photography and enjoying nature on the volcanic Monache Mountain. Access for winter cross-country skiing is challenging because this area is at least 25 miles from a plowed road.

Within the eastern portion of the polygon (South Sierra East), there is screening from vegetation and topography. There is a distant view of Highway 395 that is visible along the eastern boundary, but not highly visible. A small portion is adjacent to developments at Walker Creek, Olancha Pass Trailhead, Sage Flat (private property), Kennedy Meadows Campground and Tunnawee (private property). Most of area is several miles from any development and there is little evidence of civilization. There are some areas that have existing uses that would limit the opportunity for solitude, such as: livestock grazing and cattle drives in the Walker Creek area and on the Olancha Pass Trail; dispersed camping and off highway vehicle use on 19S01 (Walker Creek area); dispersed camping and trailhead at Olancha Pass Trailhead; sounds from private residences at Sage Flat; and Kennedy Meadows Campground (paved road and campground noise). The potential for encounters with other visitors is low, based on the low number of current visitors to the South Sierra Wilderness. Current primitive recreation activities in this area include hiking, backpacking and horseback riding on several forest system trails that cross the polygon and access the South Sierra Wilderness and deer hunting in the fall. Most of the recreation use is concentrated near Olancha Pass, Kennedy Meadows (Pacific Crest Trail) and Wildrose Trail. The Pacific Crest Trail north of Kennedy Meadows sees large numbers of through-hikers in May and June. The degree of challenge along trails is similar to the adjacent wilderness, except that the challenge is greater on the Haiwee Trail because of extensive flash flood damage. Travel along or up the steep eastern escarpment of the Sierra Nevada would be challenging because there are no trails and surface water can be scarce. The portion of the area near the South Fork Kern River is a popular primitive recreation area during spring, summer and fall months. There are also opportunities for wildlife observation, photography and enjoying nature. Due to unreliable snowpack, this area is not suitable for cross-country skiing.

#### *Other Features of Value*

The western portion of the polygon contains the sensitive plant, Kern milkvetch and the rare plants, mountain yellow violet and field ivesia. Monache Mountain, a unique volcanic feature, is located in this area.

The eastern portion of the polygon contains Mojave Desert and oak woodlands with high ecological integrity. True Mojave Desert and oak woodland ecosystems are largely intact (Joshua trees, cholla cactus, creosote, plus healthy canyon live oak ecosystems and pinyon-juniper). The area provides rare habitat for a butterfly species of concern, and has habitat for spring snails and the Kern slender salamander. Sierra Nevada bighorn sheep are in the northern portion of the polygon. The area includes the rare plants, Kern Canyon clarkia and Charlotte's phacelia. It contains the northern most population of silk tassel bush (uncommon on the east-side).

#### **Manageability**

The western portion of the polygon is irregularly shaped due to cherry-stem roads (including Monache Jeep Road), as well as cherry-stem roads in the southern half of the polygon. These cherry-stem roads protrude into the polygon, nearly splitting it half in some places. In addition, there are motorized trails in the area. The Monache area is a popular off highway vehicle recreation area, and includes roads for four wheel drive vehicles, as well as single-track

motorcycle trails. There is a private land parcel along the northeastern perimeter (Anchor Ranch). There is a special use permit for a water diversion for one of the cabins that is located on private land.

The eastern portion of the polygon follows the eastern boundary of the South Sierra Wilderness and the straight-line forest boundary along the southern and eastern perimeter. There are very few cherry-stem roads that protrude into the polygon; mostly short spurs along the western perimeter (Haiwee Pass Trailhead, 0.9 miles; 21S101, 0.9 miles; and Tunnawee, 0.5 miles). The northern portion of the polygon is narrow and elongated north to south, and there is a buffer between the road system and existing wilderness boundary. The southwestern perimeter is narrow and elongated west to east, and there is a buffer between Kennedy Meadows road and existing wilderness boundary. The remaining areas of the polygon are up to four miles across, with little to no development or permanent intrusions. The polygon borders both the South Sierra Wilderness and the Sacatar Trail Wilderness (Bureau of Land Management). Grazing occurs in the eastern portion of the polygon, as well as on adjacent Bureau of Land Management lands. Talus Canyon, Dunmovin spring box, but there is no record of water rights. The Los Angeles Department of Water and Power has infrastructure in Haiwee Canyon.

### Summary of Potential Suitability for Inclusion in the National Wilderness Preservation System

In, Monache and Blackrock, there is livestock grazing and there have been watershed treatments in the area. There are developments related to grazing improvements in the area. The area is believed to have moderate ecological integrity with some legacy and current grazing and off highway vehicle impacts. Off highway vehicle recreation and dispersed camping is popular in the area, which impacts the opportunity for solitude. There may be opportunity for primitive and unconfined recreation.

In South Sierra East, there is livestock grazing that occurs in the area. There are developments related to grazing improvements, Los Angeles Department of Water and Power infrastructure (Haiwee Canyon area), and recreation developments that may be in the area. The area is believed to have high ecological integrity with true Mojave Desert and oak woodland ecosystems which are largely intact. There is the opportunity for solitude, limited in a few specific areas. There may be opportunity for primitive and unconfined recreation.

Because of adjacency to existing wilderness, and the many intact and unique vegetation features, the portion of the polygon located east of South Sierra Wilderness has the potential to be reshaped to exclude developments that are substantially noticeable and existing uses that limit the opportunity for solitude.

This polygon presents an opportunity to protect ecological groups that may be minimally represented in the National Wilderness Preservation System. Ecological groups with less than 10 percent of their national extent in the National Wilderness Preservation System comprise 3,556 acres. Ecological groups with less than 15 percent of their national extent in the National Wilderness Preservation System comprise an additional 14,021 acres. The northern and southwestern portion of the polygon is a narrow buffer between existing wilderness and the road system, which affects manageability. The remaining polygon area east of South Sierra Wilderness has the potential to be reshaped, particularly adjacent to existing wilderness. (For map see Exhibit A – Inyo National Forest Evaluation Maps – Evaluation Map I.)

## Sequoia National Forest

### **Polygon 18 (Southern Paiute Mountains)**

#### General Description

Polygon 18 is a mid-elevation, mountainous canyon area along the south side of the Piute Mountains. It ranges in elevation from 5,000 feet to 7,500 feet. Vegetation is dominated by chaparral, foothill oak-pine woodland, ponderosa pine and sage brush on upper slopes. The area is 6,337 acres of land and is irregularly shaped. It is not contiguous with any other roadless or wilderness areas. It is bordered by private land on the east and south sides and by National Forest System land on the north and west. The area was heavily occupied during the Gold Rush and there are multiple historical mining sites within the polygon.

National Vegetation Classification System data indicates 2 percent of the area of the polygon (128 acres) consists of ecological groups that have less than 5 percent of their national extent protected in the National Wilderness Preservation System. This polygon also contains five ecological groups with a total area of 2,256 acres which have less than 20 percent of their national extent protected in the National Wilderness Preservation System. The most prevalent is Mediterranean California Mesic mixed conifer forest and woodland.

#### Wilderness Characteristics

##### *Degree the Area Generally Appears to be Affected Primarily by the Forces of Nature*

The area is part of the Loco Bill allotment and Piute Grazing allotment and is visited by cattle permittees in the course of managing their livestock and livestock infrastructure. Improvements within the area include grazing-related infrastructure (fences) and several Level 1 roads.

The area has also been affected by logging activity and past mining operations. Evidence of historic mining operations includes at least two standing log cabins, Onion Patch Cabin and Gerry Atkin's Cabin. There are numerous foundations left from when the area was popular in the 1930s when cabins associated with mining claims were built. There are many adits and mine shafts and two mill sites. There is also a 10+ acre ground-sluicing area that uses an industrial placer mining technique that has significantly altered the landscape. Numerous mining ditches and unauthorized use on remnants of a complex road system occur in this area.

All of the recorded mining sites are located on the north-facing portion of the unit near Claraville. There may be additional mining near the southern edge of the unit. The Gwenn Mine, one of the largest producers of gold and tungsten in the Piutes, is less than a mile from the boundary of the polygon. A Comprehensive Environmental Response, Compensation, and Liability Act (Superfund) repository is approximately half mile outside the boundary and has potential impacts to the view shed from within the area. Historical records suggest the southern escarpment of the Piutes saw a great deal of mining and prospection between 1900 and 1940.

##### *Opportunities for Solitude or Primitive and Unconfined Recreation*

The area is very lightly visited, mainly hunters in the fall, due to limited access and the lack of facilities or special features that attract visitors. The area has few signs of contemporary development within its boundaries. The polygon is bordered by private land that is mostly undeveloped, facilitating opportunities for solitude in the area. However, motorized access on the perimeter of the polygon, evidence of cattle grazing, and Level 1 roads within the polygon reduce the visitor's ability to feel a part of nature and engage in primitive and unconfined recreation

activities. The potential future development of private property could threaten opportunities for solitude in the future. Southwest portion of the area is steep, rugged and remote and offers the highest opportunity for solitude and challenge using outdoor skills.

#### *Other Features of Value*

This area contains a relatively intact stands of Black Oak Forest and Canyon Live Oak Woodland. It also has a metamorphic roof pendent running through it with a mile long and 1,000 foot thick piece of marble within it.

#### **Manageability**

The size, shape, and steep and rugged terrain would be conducive for managing wilderness characteristics; however the isolated location away from other wilderness in addition to adjacent private lands complicates any protective management or enforcement. Motorized use on remnants of a complex road system has proven to be beyond the resources of the agency at this time. Future development potential of private lands adjacent to the polygon might make wilderness management challenging in the future.

#### **Summary of Potential Suitability for Inclusion in the National Wilderness Preservation System**

Despite the area's natural appearance, the area has limited potential suitability for inclusion in the National Wilderness Preservation System due to the evidence of historic mining operations, existence of roads, impacts from activities immediately adjacent to the area and difficulty with manageability. The evidence of historic mining operations and Level 1 roads detract somewhat from the natural character of the landscape making the imprint of man's work substantially noticeable. Human activities on adjacent private properties, current and potential, reduce the potential suitability. This polygon presents a limited opportunity to protect ecological groups that may be minimally represented in the National Wilderness Preservation System. Ecological groups with less than 5 percent of their national extent in the National Wilderness Preservation System comprise a low number of acres. Ecological groups with between 10 and 20 percent of their national extent in the National Wilderness Preservation System comprise 2,256 acres. (For map see Exhibit B – Sequoia National Forest Evaluation Maps – Evaluation Map A and Evaluation Map G.)

### **Polygon 36 (Adjacent to Sequoia-Kings Canyon National Park Wilderness)**

#### **General Description**

Polygon 36 is a mid-elevation, mountainous area primarily of montane hardwood and mixed conifer vegetation. The area is 2,089 acres of land within the forest boundary, has some private inholdings, and is adjacent to private land used primarily for ranching. It has a short portion of the boundary (approximately 0.75 mile) that is contiguous with Sequoia and Kings Canyon National Parks wilderness. It is within the Giant Sequoia National Monument. The area is well used by the public for dispersed recreation. This is a popular off highway vehicle use area. Firewood cutting occurs in the area. The overall shape is a small oddly shaped, narrow polygon.

National Vegetation Classification System data indicates 1 percent of the area of the polygon (14 acres) consists of ecological groups that have less than 5 percent of their national extent protected in the National Wilderness Preservation System. This polygon also contains 6 ecological groups

with a total area of 693 acres which have less than 20 percent of their national extent protected in the National Wilderness Preservation System.

### Wilderness Characteristics

#### *Degree the Area Generally Appears to be Affected Primarily by the Forces of Nature*

A large portion of the area shows signs of current and past human activity. The area includes past timber harvest activity with the associated Level 1 roads and some plantations. There are communication towers on adjacent private land. The area appears somewhat natural in condition but does not provide a sense of leaving civilization behind because of OHV use, level one roads, plantations, and uses on adjacent lands.

The area has been affected by timber harvest, cattle grazing and fire suppression. The overall character of the area appears natural. The unharvested forest provides valuable wildlife habitat and good water quality. No confirmed invasive species; however there are bullfrogs in nearby Pierce Pond.

#### *Opportunities for Solitude or Primitive and Unconfined Recreation*

Off highway vehicle noise can be heard in many parts of the area and limit opportunities for solitude or primitive and unconfined recreation.

#### *Other Features of Value*

There are no unique or high value special resources that contribute to the wilderness characteristics of the area.

### Manageability

Adjacent private property, small size, past timber harvest activity and signs of civilization would make this a difficult area to manage for wilderness character.

### Summary of Potential Suitability for Inclusion in the National Wilderness Preservation System

Past timber harvest activity with the associated Level 1 roads and some plantations are substantially noticeable. The area is used for off highway vehicle recreation, woodcutting and grazing. Adjacent private property, small size, past timber harvest activity and signs of civilization would make this a difficult area to manage for wilderness characteristics. This polygon presents a limited opportunity to protect ecological groups that may be minimally represented in the National Wilderness Preservation System. Ecological groups with less than 5 percent of their national extent in the National Wilderness Preservation System comprise a low number of acres. Ecological groups with between 10 and 20 percent of their national extent in the National Wilderness Preservation System comprise 693 acres. (For map see Exhibit B – Sequoia National Forest Evaluation Maps – Evaluation Map A and Evaluation Map B.)

## **Polygon 63 (Lower Kern River Gorge)**

### General Description

Polygon 63 is a low elevation, mountainous canyon area along the southeast side of the lower Kern River gorge. It ranges in elevation from 3,200 feet to 5,800 feet. Vegetation is dominated by chaparral with expansive areas of blue oak woodland, live oak forest, black oak woodland, and lower mixed conifer forest. The area is 5,223 acres of land averaging 3 miles wide and 12 miles

long, roughly rectangular in shape. It is not contiguous with any other roadless or wilderness areas. It is bordered by Bureau of Land Management, National Forest System and a small amount of private property. This polygon is contiguous to Polygon 73.

National Vegetation Classification System data indicates 1 percent of the area of the polygon (33 acres) consists of ecological groups that have less than 5 percent of their national extent protected in the National Wilderness Preservation System. This polygon also contains 8 ecological groups with a total area of 1,543 acres which have less than 20 percent of their national extent protected in the National Wilderness Preservation System. Each of the ecological groups comprises less than 1,000 acres in the polygon.

### Wilderness Characteristics

#### *Degree the Area Generally Appears to be Affected Primarily by the Forces of Nature*

The area generally appears natural. Cattle grazing is evident within the area. Wild pigs and small areas of invasive plants are also found within the polygon. The area is very lightly visited (mainly hunters in the fall) due to limited access and lack of special features to attract visitors. It is overlain by the Breckenridge and Cow Flat grazing allotments and is visited by cattle permittees in the course of managing their livestock and livestock infrastructure. Forest Service Road 28S09 runs close to the northwestern boundary and Forest Service Road 18S14 runs close to the southern, and both are open to all motorized vehicles. The Breckenridge Road, County Route 218, is near the southeastern boundary.

#### *Opportunities for Solitude or Primitive and Unconfined Recreation*

The area has little visitation or signs of development within its boundaries and the terrain isolates visitors especially in the interior providing opportunities for solitude and primitive and unconfined recreation. Sights and sounds of adjacent activities on the lower Kern River and the two-lane State Highway 178, a major route connecting the Bakersfield metropolitan area with the Kern River Valley are noticeable along some portions of the northwestern boundary. This area is contiguous with Polygon 73 expanding the opportunity for solitude in the eastern portion of the polygon. A dead-end, motorized 4x4 trail runs one ridgeline and the existence of two motorized trails could reduce a visitor's opportunity for solitude and primitive and unconfined recreation. Mechanized use is also prevalent.

#### *Other Features of Value*

This area contains a large relatively intact stand of ecologically important blue oak, canyon oak, and black oak. This provides important habitat linkage between low elevation annual grassland and higher elevation mixed coniferous forest (3,500 feet vertical). Condor roosting areas are found in this area as well. It is also provides important riparian habitat for the rare Kern Slender Salamander.

### Manageability

The size and shape of the polygon is conducive for management as wilderness. Management as wilderness would displace existing motorized and mechanized recreation users and could result in management challenges in the future.

## Summary of Potential Suitability for Inclusion in the National Wilderness Preservation System

The area possesses wilderness characteristics and unique ecological and wildlife features. The area appears natural, has little development and is primarily utilized as grazing land. Opportunities for solitude exist in most of the polygon due to light visitation and limited access points; however sights and sounds of human activity below the area along the Kern River Corridor and State Highway 178 may impact wilderness solitude experiences. There are no trailheads or developed recreation sites adjacent to or within the polygon. This polygon is contiguous to polygon 73. Although it is very lightly used for recreation, some motorized and mechanized recreational enthusiasts value the use of this area.

This polygon presents a limited opportunity to protect ecological groups that may be minimally represented in the National Wilderness Preservation System. Ecological groups with less than 5 percent of their national extent in the National Wilderness Preservation System comprise a low number of acres. Ecological groups with between 10 and 20 percent of their national extent in the National Wilderness Preservation System comprise 1,543 acres. (For map see Exhibit B – Sequoia National Forest Evaluation Maps – Evaluation Map F.)

### **Polygon 66 (Saturday Peak–Greenhorn Roadless)**

#### General Description

Polygon 66 is a low elevation, mountainous canyon area along the north side of the lower Kern River Gorge. It ranges in elevation from 1,500 feet to 4,500 feet. Vegetation is dominated by annual grassland with areas of blue oak woodland, live oak woodland, and chaparral. The area is 8,176 acres of land about 1.5 miles wide and 9 miles long, roughly rectangular in shape. It is not contiguous with any other roadless or wilderness areas, and the western perimeter is on the forest boundary closest to the Bakersfield urban area. It is bordered by private land on the north and by the Kern River on the south.

The area is very lightly visited, mainly by hunters in the fall. It is overlain by the Oak Flat Grazing Allotment and is visited by cattle permittees in the course of managing their livestock and livestock infrastructure. The two-lane section of California State Highway 178 runs along the southern boundary, along the south-east side of the Kern River. There are several developed day use sites just outside the perimeter of the area.

National Vegetation Classification System data, based on the polygon size of 8,289 acres, indicates less than 1 percent of the area of the polygon (23 acres) consists of ecological groups that have less than 5 percent of their national extent protected in the National Wilderness Preservation System. This polygon also contains 6 ecological groups with a total area of 3,123 acres which have less than 20 percent of their national extent protected in the National Wilderness Preservation System. The most prevalent are Central California Valley and Southern Coastal grassland and California Central Valley mixed oak savanna.

#### Wilderness Characteristics

##### *Degree the Area Generally Appears to be Affected Primarily by the Forces of Nature*

The overall character of the land appears natural. Improvements within the area that infringe on wilderness naturalness consist of livestock structures, the Oak Flat Lookout, a heavily used recreation rental, and a few off-highway vehicle trails near the lookout. Adjacent uses affecting naturalness include a power transmission line in the west and recreation use along the Kern River.

### *Opportunities for Solitude or Primitive and Unconfined Recreation*

Due to the narrow, elongated shape, opportunities for solitude or primitive and unconfined recreation are limited. Activities and uses on its perimeter can be seen and heard from within the area.

### *Other Features of Value*

This area contains a relatively intact stand of ecologically important Blue Oak woodland.

### **Manageability**

Size and shape would be conducive for management.

### **Summary of Potential Suitability for Inclusion in the National Wilderness Preservation System**

The area has some wilderness characteristics, appears natural but is inhabited by invasive plants. Solitude and primitive and unconfined recreation opportunities are limited by adjacent land uses and private land. The area has minor developments, primarily related to grazing activities and the Oak Flat fire lookout/recreation rental. Size and shape would be conducive for management; however adjacent land uses on private lands as well as existing off-highway vehicle trails would pose potential challenges to manageability of this area as wilderness. This polygon presents a limited opportunity to protect ecological groups that may be minimally represented in the National Wilderness Preservation System. Ecological groups with less than 5 percent of their national extent in the National Wilderness Preservation System comprise a low number of acres. Ecological groups with between 10 and 20 percent of their national extent in the National Wilderness Preservation System comprise 3,123 acres. (For map see Exhibit B – Sequoia National Forest Evaluation Maps – Evaluation Map F.)

## **Polygon 73 (Lightner Peak – Mill Creek)**

### **General Description**

Polygon 73 is a low elevation, mountainous canyon area along the southeast side of the lower and mid elevation Kern River Gorge. It ranges in elevation from 3,200 feet to 6,700 feet. Vegetation is dominated by chaparral with expansive areas of blue oak woodland, live oak forest, black oak woodland, and lower mixed conifer forest. The area is 15,128 acres of land averaging 3 miles wide and 9 miles long and is irregular in shape. It is bordered by Bureau of Land Management, National Forest System land and a little private property and contiguous with Polygon 63.

National Vegetation Classification System data indicates 1 percent of the area of the polygon (143 acres) consists of ecological groups that have less than 5 percent of their national extent protected in the National Wilderness Preservation System. This polygon also contains 8 ecological groups with a total area of 4,483 acres which have less than 20 percent of their national extent protected in the National Wilderness Preservation System. The most prevalent are California lower montane blue oak-foothill pine woodland and savanna and Mediterranean California mixed oak woodland.

### **Wilderness Characteristics**

#### *Degree the Area Generally Appears to be Affected Primarily by the Forces of Nature*

The area is visited by hunters in the fall, and motorized recreationists on several motorized routes within the area. Except for the motorized routes, the area has limited access, lack of amenities to

attract visitors, and remote location. It is overlain by the Hobo Ridge Grazing Allotments and is visited by cattle permittees in the course of managing their livestock and livestock infrastructure. The two lane section of California State Highway 178, a major connector between the Bakersfield metropolitan area and the Kern River Valley runs close to the northwestern boundary. The area has been affected by cattle grazing, wild pigs and small areas of invasive plants. However, the overall character of the area appears natural. The only developments within the area are two motorcycle trails, and livestock fences.

#### *Opportunities for Solitude or Primitive and Unconfined Recreation*

Several motorized trails bisecting the area, as well as roads adjacent to the area limit opportunities for solitude and unconfined recreation. Mechanized use is prevalent in the area. Sights and sounds of adjacent activities on the lower Kern River, the Kern Canyon Road and the two-lane State Highway 178 are noticeable from within the portion of the area along the northwestern boundary.

#### *Other Features of Value*

This area contains large relatively intact stand of ecologically important blue oak, canyon oak, and black oak. This provides important habitat linkage between low elevation annual grassland and higher elevation mixed coniferous forest (3,500 feet vertical). A stand of endemic Piute cypress (1 of 13 in the Kern Valley area) occurs in the eastern portion of this polygon. Condor roosting areas are found in this area as well. It is also provides important riparian habitat for the rare Kern slender salamander. Visitors enjoy spectacular sycamore riparian forests, salamanders and wildflower displays in the spring.

#### **Manageability**

The area is accessed from the bottom along the lower Kern Canyon Road and from the top of Breckenridge Road. The size and shape is conducive for management as wilderness however the motorized access within and at the boundaries makes the area difficult to manage as wilderness.

#### **Summary of Potential Suitability for Inclusion in the National Wilderness Preservation System**

Although the area possesses wilderness characteristics and unique ecological and wildlife features, evidence of existing uses within and adjacent to portions of the area detract from potential suitability. Although it is very lightly used for recreation, the motorized and mechanized opportunity is valued by some users and limits opportunities for solitude and primitive and unconfined recreation.

This polygon presents a limited opportunity to protect ecological groups that may be minimally represented in the National Wilderness Preservation System. Ecological groups with less than 5 percent of their national extent in the National Wilderness Preservation System comprise a low number of acres. Ecological groups with between 10 and 20 percent of their national extent in the National Wilderness Preservation System comprise 4,483 acres. (For map see Exhibit B – Sequoia National Forest Evaluation Maps – Evaluation Map F.)

### **Polygon 99 (Sunday Peak)**

#### **General Description**

Polygon 99 is a mid-elevation mountainous area. Vegetation primarily consists of oak woodland with open stands of pine along the northern half of the unit. Higher elevations within the unit are transitional from oak brush lowlands to open stands of mixed pine with red fir on north facing

slopes. The unit is 9,386 acres of land, elongated and irregularly shaped and is not contiguous with any wildernesses and is partially within the Giant Sequoia National Monument.

The communities of Posey, Sugar Loaf, and Panorama Heights are adjacent to this area. The area is surrounded by roads connecting to inholdings and private property. There are several motorized routes inside the unit.

National Vegetation Classification System data indicates less than 1 percent of the area of the polygon (7 acres) consists of ecological groups that have less than 5 percent of their national extent protected in the National Wilderness Preservation System. This polygon also contains 4 ecological groups with a total area of 3,224 acres which have less than 20 percent of their national extent protected in the National Wilderness Preservation System. The most prevalent is Mediterranean California mesic mixed conifer forest and woodland.

### Wilderness Characteristics

#### *Degree the Area Generally Appears to be Affected Primarily by the Forces of Nature*

The unit has been affected by human intervention. Vegetation management projects to reduce fire risks to private property, past logging, and effects from grazing have reduced the apparent naturalness of the area

About 5 percent along the northern edge has been impacted by vegetation management projects to reduce fire risk to adjacent private property structures. Fire suppression activities have led to denser stands of shade tolerant species throughout the entire unit. The forested stand average age is lower than it would have been before fire suppression, while the brush field average age is higher.

About 20 percent has been impacted to some degree by past logging, although these past activities are not readily visible. Some patches of clear cuts are noticeable to the general recreational visitor. Past timber sale areas and access roads have become less noticeable.

Approximately 30 percent of the area appears to reflect ecological conditions associated with effects of grazing. The entire area is in 2 grazing allotments. Grazing improvements are fence lines, a stock driveway and troughs. Livestock use is concentrated on the west side of the unit where brush fields have been type converted to annual grass (approximately 300 acres) and in oak woodlands.

Illegal marijuana cultivation and associated illegal pesticide use and illegal cutting of vegetation have been noted in the past.

Non-native species include feral hogs and rainbow trout are present. Small isolated patches of nonnative cheat grass and thistle exist along roadways adjacent to the unit. Air quality is poor to fair during summer months and is variable and dependent on the day and local fire conditions. Generally, air quality related to human activity in the adjacent San Joaquin Valley has been improving over the past decade.

#### *Opportunities for Solitude or Primitive and Unconfined Recreation*

Given the rugged topography there is minimal recreational use on the steeper slopes. Hikers use five system trails during the summer. Peak use is during the fall deer hunting season. There is also some mountain biking use. There is a primitive recreation opportunity along existing trails 32E38 and 31E60 because there is no development and water sources exist.

Ten percent of the area is considered developed. There are 7 special use permits to adjacent private property owners for pipelines that provide drinking water from streams. Recreation developments are five forest system hiking trails that provide through access to overnight recreational hikers and daytime picnickers.

Special uses, development and motorized use around and within the unit limit solitude or primitive and unconfined recreation. Sound from adjacent roadways and private property parcels are pervasive in most parts of the unit limiting opportunities for solitude or primitive and unconfined recreation.

### *Other Features of Value*

The area is important for habitat connectivity for the Pacific Fisher. It is also important to a species of butterfly called Greenhorn Fritillary, which exists on the western slopes of the Greenhorn Mountains and nowhere else. There are a large number of prehistoric Native American trails and associated sites of significance to Native American tribes.

### **Manageability**

Reintroducing ecological condition that would normally be associated with the area without human intervention would require the use of fire. This would be difficult, due to the proximity of private property risk. Controlling motorized use within the unit would be difficult since most of the unit is surrounded by roads and there are four roads within the unit. This would be difficult, due to the number of access points and the difficulty in patrolling.

Twenty Eight percent of the area is within a Wild Urban Interface Defense Zone and 72 percent is within a Threat Zone. Achieving the desired vegetative modification goals would be difficult, if actions to achieve these goals are limited to natural fire.

### **Summary of Potential Suitability for Inclusion in the National Wilderness Preservation System**

The potential suitability for inclusion is low. This is because of the effects of human intervention, lack of solitude, and manageability problems. This polygon presents a limited opportunity to protect ecological groups that may be minimally represented in the National Wilderness Preservation System. Ecological groups with less than 5 percent of their national extent in the National Wilderness Preservation System comprise a low number of acres. Ecological groups with between 10 and 20 percent of their national extent in the National Wilderness Preservation System comprise 3,224 acres. (For map see Exhibit B – Sequoia National Forest Evaluation Maps – Evaluation Map E.)

## **Polygon 120 (Lion Ridge Roadless)**

### **General Description**

Polygon 120 is a mid-elevation mountainous area of montane hardwood, shrubs and annual grass in the lower elevations and to Sierran mixed conifer in the higher elevations. The area is 6,865 acres of land and an irregular polygon. It contains 4,265 acres of Lion Ridge Inventoried Roadless Area. It is entirely within the Giant Sequoia National Monument.

National Vegetation Classification System data indicates none of the area of the polygon consists of ecological groups that have less than 5 percent of their national extent protected in the National Wilderness Preservation System. This polygon also contains 4 ecological groups with a total area of 2,580 acres which have less than 20 percent of their national extent protected in the National

Wilderness Preservation System. The most prevalent are Mediterranean California mesic mixed conifer forest and woodland and Mediterranean California mixed oak woodland.

### Wilderness Characteristics

#### *Degree the Area Generally Appears to be Affected Primarily by the Forces of Nature*

The unit has been affected by human intervention. Fire suppression activities have led to denser stands of shade tolerant species throughout the entire unit. The forested stand average age is lower than it would have been before fire suppression, while the brush field average age is higher.

About 25 percent of the area has been logged and some associated road beds exist. The area contains a fuel break and has experienced some limited prescribed burning in the past.

The entire area is in 2 grazing allotments. Grazing improvements are fence lines, a stock driveway and water troughs. Impacts associated with grazing include intense type converted annual grasslands. Grazing also occurs at higher elevations in oak woodlands

There is little recreation use currently. There is limited access and there are no facilities. There are 2 system trails in the area, one that is designed for bicycle use and one that is designed for pack and saddle stock.

There is one Level 1 road. Private lands comprise 10 percent of the polygon boundary with the community of Pine Flat and their access roads immediately to the west of the polygon. The area has frequent illegal marijuana cultivation sites with associated illegal herbicide use.

Introduced species include feral pigs and invasive plants.

#### *Opportunities for Solitude or Primitive and Unconfined Recreation*

There is primitive recreation opportunity at the higher elevations, although historically little use has occurred. The potential for solitude is low; sound from adjacent roadways and the adjacent community of Pine Flat and its associated traffic and public noise causes unwanted sounds and disturbance along the shared boundary edge, pervasive in most parts of the unit. Some areas within the interior are screened from sight. Solitude and unconfined recreation with a sense of privacy is limited in this unit.

#### *Other Features of Value*

The Starvation Giant Sequoia Grove provides a very unique and high value special resource that contributes to the wilderness character of the area. The polygon includes the historic Starvation Grove Nest Site and the Lion Ridge Roost Site which receive special management for the protection of California condor roosting and nesting habitat. The area is also adjacent to Packsaddle and Deer Creek Giant Sequoia Groves. The area does contain several Forest Service sensitive species including the Greenhorn fritillary, fisher, marten, goshawk, California spotted owl, and occasional visitations by California condor. The area includes a large block of contiguous conifer and hardwood forest.

### Manageability

Reintroducing ecological condition that would normally be associated with the area without human intervention would require the use of fire. This could be accomplished at higher elevations, but would be risky at lower elevations where 10 percent of the polygon boundary is

shared with private land uses. Controlling motorized use within the unit would be difficult where the unit is adjacent to roads, due to the number of access points and the difficulty in patrolling.

Four percent of the area is within a Wild Urban Interface Defense Zone and 77 percent is within a Threat Zone. Achieving the desired vegetative modification goals would be difficult, if actions to achieve these goals are limited to natural fire.

### Summary of Potential Suitability for Inclusion in the National Wilderness Preservation System

The Potential for suitability for inclusion is low. This is because of the effects of human intervention, lack of solitude, and manageability problems. The area does provide habitat to a number of sensitive plants and animals, including the Starvation Grove Nest Site and Lion Ridge Roost Area for condor.

This polygon presents a limited opportunity to protect ecological groups that may be minimally represented in the National Wilderness Preservation System. There are no ecological groups with less than 5 percent of their national extent in the National Wilderness Preservation System. Ecological groups with between 10 and 20 percent of their national extent in the National Wilderness Preservation System comprise 2,580 acres. (For map see Exhibit B – Sequoia National Forest Evaluation Maps – Evaluation Map E.)

## Polygon 160 (Slate Mountain)

### General Description

Polygon 160 is a mid- to high-elevation mountainous area composed primarily of mixed conifer, Giant Sequoia groves and sub-alpine areas near Slate Mountain. The polygon is south of Highway 190 and west of the Western Divide Highway. Both of these highways are major travel routes into the southern portion of the Giant Sequoia National Monument. The unit is 16,126 acres of land that is oblong in shape. The Slate Mountain Botanical Area is within this polygon. The polygon is within an inventoried roadless area and the Giant Sequoia National Monument. Immediately adjacent to this unit are three small communities, a Forest Service heliport, the Tule Indian Reservation and a highway corridor that provides entry into the southern portion of the Giant Sequoia National Monument. There are adjacent recreational developments.

National Vegetation Classification System data indicates less than 1 percent of the area of the polygon (40 acres) consists of ecological groups that have less than 5 percent of their national extent protected in the National Wilderness Preservation System. This polygon also contains 4 ecological groups with a total area of 2,779 acres which have less than 20 percent of their national extent protected in the National Wilderness Preservation System. The most prevalent is Mediterranean California mesic mixed conifer forest and woodland.

### Wilderness Characteristics

#### *Degree the Area Generally Appears to be Affected Primarily by the Forces of Nature*

The unit has been affected by human intervention. Fire suppression activities have led to denser stands of shade tolerant species throughout the entire unit. The forested stand average age is lower than it would have been before fire suppression, while the brush field average age is higher. About 5 percent of the area has been logged and some associated road beds and plantations exist.

About 25 percent of the unit (southern portion) is part of a grazing allotment. Grazing improvements are fence lines, and water troughs. Grazing activity mostly occurs in meadows; long term monitoring indicates meadows are within their natural range of variability.

The majority of unit is undeveloped. Access roads from previous management are not obtrusive. Approximately 5 percent of the unit has been impacted by historic logging with associated road beds and plantations. The developments within the area include Level 1 roads and four roads under special use permits associated with adjacent private property parcels. There is a historic lookout cabin on Slate Mountain that is not maintained and powerlines exist within the unit. Motorized use is limited to a snowmobile route over a small portion of the unit's eastern edge. The Summit National Recreation Trail bisects the area and allows mountain bike use.

Some nonnative fish are stocked within the area. There is no mining in the area.

#### *Opportunities for Solitude or Primitive and Unconfined Recreation*

There are opportunities for solitude and primitive recreation in the area, overnight camping is uncommon, although it generally occurs during hunting season. The Summit National Recreation Trail and Forest Service Trail 31E31 bisects the area and provide good access for recreation visitors. Highway 190 and the Western Divide Highway are major travel routes in the southern portion of the Giant Sequoia National Monument. Traffic noise along the highway corridors is limited and would likely not impact the atmosphere of remote solitude. There is a heliport along the eastern boundary of the unit. Helicopters coming and going out of the heliport could be disruptive to visitors.

#### *Other Features of Value*

There are Giant Sequoia Groves within the polygon and Slate Mountain is an impressive peak with rock outcrops.

#### **Manageability**

Reintroducing ecological condition that would normally be associated with the area without human intervention would require the use of fire. This could be accomplished where the threat to private property is low. Controlling motorized use within the unit would be difficult where the unit is adjacent to roads, due to the number of access points and the difficulty in patrolling.

The manageability concerns include the established use of mountain bikes on the Summit National Recreation Trail and 4 special use road permits to adjacent private property owners. Noise from system roads along a portion of the perimeter may be heard from a mile away. Noise associated with vehicular travel on adjacent roads and helicopter travel will have some impact on solitude.

Eight percent of the area is within a Wild Urban Interface Defense Zone and 61 percent is within a Threat Zone. Achieving the desired vegetative modification goals would be difficult, if actions to achieve these goals are limited to natural fire.

#### **Summary of Potential Suitability for Inclusion in the National Wilderness Preservation System**

The Potential for suitability for inclusion is low to moderate. This is because of the effects of human intervention, and manageability problems. It is within the Giant Sequoia National Monument as well as an inventoried roadless area. Groves of important Giant Sequoias also grow within the unit and the Slate Mountain Botanical Area is within the polygon. This polygon

presents a limited opportunity to protect ecological groups that may be minimally represented in the National Wilderness Preservation System. Ecological groups with less than 5 percent of their national extent in the National Wilderness Preservation System comprise a low number of acres. Ecological groups with between 10 and 20 percent of their national extent in the National Wilderness Preservation System comprise 2,779 acres. (For map see Exhibit B – Sequoia National Forest Evaluation Maps – Evaluation Map C.)

## **Polygon 162 (North of Black Mountain)**

### **General Description**

Polygon 162 is a low- to mid-elevation mountainous area composed primarily of chaparral, oak woodlands and mixed conifers north of the Black Mountain. The polygon is south of Highway 190 which is a major travel route into the southern portion of the Giant Sequoia National Monument. Much of the area is visible from the highway and associated recreation facilities, as well as the valley below. The unit is 15,806 acres of land that is oblong in shape. The polygon is within an inventoried roadless area and the Giant Sequoia National Monument. National Vegetation Classification System data indicates less than 1 percent of the area of the polygon (1 acre) consists of ecological groups that have less than 5 percent of their national extent protected in the National Wilderness Preservation System. This polygon also contains 7 ecological groups with a total area of 6,059 acres which have less than 20 percent of their national extent protected in the National Wilderness Preservation System. The most prevalent are Mediterranean California mesic mixed conifer forest and woodland and Mediterranean California mixed oak woodland.

### **Wilderness Characteristics**

#### *Degree the Area Generally Appears to be Affected Primarily by the Forces of Nature*

The unit has been affected by human intervention. Fire suppression activities have led to denser stands of shade tolerant species throughout the entire unit. The forested stand average age is lower than it would have been before fire suppression, while the brush field average age is higher.

The unit is largely undeveloped. The developments within the area are Level 1 roads; two special uses permitted roads associated with adjacent private property parcels and one special use permit for an oil and gas pipeline. There is one inactive and unnoticeable mine in the area. There are no facilities or motorized use in the unit. Portions of Forest Service Trail 30E29 cross the northern edge of the unit. Only 1 percent of the area has been impacted by historic logging with limited road beds.

Approximately 2/3 of the unit includes two allotments with associated water troughs and fence lines. Some nonnative fish were stocked in the past and Tree of Heaven, Italian Thistle and Tocalote are other nonnative species present in the unit.

Immediately adjacent to this unit are developed recreation facilities, the Tule Indian Reservation and a highway corridor that provides entry into the southern portion of the Giant Sequoia National Monument.

#### *Opportunities for Solitude or Primitive and Unconfined Recreation*

No current trails provide access to any large portion of the unit. Several old trails once accessed the area but are no longer maintained. The area is primitive and quiet once access is gained by overland hiking, although difficult in some portions due to dense stands of shrubs and steep

terrain. Traffic noise originating from the highway corridor and associated recreation facilities can be heard from the interior of the unit.

### *Other Features of Value*

There are likely prehistoric sites and trails in the area as it is adjacent to the Tule River Indian Reservation. A small portion of the Black Mountain Giant Sequoia Grove is within the southern tip of the unit. There are marble outcrops and travertine formations in the area. The area contains a number of rare and important species such as Western Pond Turtle, Delphinium, and Kaweah *Brodiaea*.

### **Manageability**

Reintroducing ecological condition that would normally be associated with the area without human intervention would require the use of fire. This could be accomplished at higher elevations, but would be risky at lower elevations where the polygon boundary is shared with private land uses. Controlling motorized use within the unit would be difficult where the unit is adjacent to roads, due to the number of access points and the difficulty in patrolling.

The manageability concerns are the 2 special use road permits to adjacent private property owners and the permit for the oil and gas pipeline. Being adjacent to the Tule River Indian Reservation could cause concerns in implementing fuels treatments designed to limit fire spread from National Forest System lands onto the reservation.

Eleven percent of the area is within a Wild Urban Interface Defense Zone and 31 percent is within a Threat Zone. Achieving the desired vegetative modification goals would be difficult, if actions to achieve these goals are limited to natural fire.

### **Summary of Potential Suitability for Inclusion in the National Wilderness Preservation System**

The Potential for suitability for inclusion is low. This is because of the effects of human intervention, and manageability problems. It is however within the Giant Sequoia National Monument as well as an inventoried roadless area.

This polygon presents a moderate opportunity to protect ecological groups that may be minimally represented in the National Wilderness Preservation System. Ecological groups with less than 5 percent of their national extent in the National Wilderness Preservation System comprise a low number of acres. Ecological groups with between 10 and 20 percent of their national extent in the National Wilderness Preservation System, however, comprise 6,059 acres. (For map see Exhibit B – Sequoia National Forest Evaluation Maps – Evaluation Map C.)

## **Polygon 173 (South of Wishon)**

### **General Description**

Polygon 173 is a lower to mid-elevation mountainous area composed primarily of chaparral, oak woodlands and mixed conifers east of the Pacific Gas and Electric Powerhouse on Highway 190. The polygon is north of Highway 190, the major access road to the southern portion of the Giant Sequoia National Monument, east of Forest Service Road 20S91, and south and west of County Road 208. There are numerous Federal Energy Regulatory Commission licensed facilities that require access and mechanical maintenance in the unit for both Pacific Gas and Electric and Southern California Edison. The unit is 5,307 acres of land that is a deformed oblong shape and narrow on the eastern side. The polygon is within the Giant Sequoia National Monument.

National Vegetation Classification System data indicates none of the area of the polygon consists of ecological groups that have less than 5 percent of their national extent protected in the National Wilderness Preservation System. This polygon also contains 6 ecological groups with a total area of 2,045 acres which have less than 20 percent of their national extent protected in the National Wilderness Preservation System. The most prevalent is Mediterranean California mixed oak woodland.

### Wilderness Characteristics

#### *Degree the Area Generally Appears to be Affected Primarily by the Forces of Nature*

The unit has been affected by human intervention. Fire suppression activities have led to denser stands of shade tolerant species. The forested stand average age is lower than it would have been before fire suppression, while the brush field average age is higher. About 5 percent of the area has been logged and some associated road beds and plantations exist.

The area is just over 5,000 acres and surrounded by roads. The western portion is developed with special use permitted activity. The developments within the area include power lines, flumes, aqueduct, penstocks, tunnels, dam, water weir and access roads. There is motorized use in the unit for access and maintenance of Federal Energy Regulatory Commission special use permits, including helicopter flights. There is an aqueduct that runs through the western portion of the unit. Only the center portion of the unit is undeveloped. The areas adjacent to the unit in the east and south are mountain communities.

The overall character of the area doesn't appear natural. There are no mines in the area. Some nonnative species are Malta star thistle, cheatgrass, and yellow star thistle.

#### *Opportunities for Solitude or Primitive and Unconfined Recreation*

There are very limited opportunities for solitude and primitive recreation in the area. It is difficult to escape the noise associated with the activities described above in an area of only just over 5,000 acres. Opportunity for primitive recreation activities exist away from existing roads and other infrastructure. Currently there is very little established primitive activity use, such as overnight camping away from routes. As the visitor moves away from the roads that encircle this polygon, the steep terrain and undeveloped character of the landscape offers a high degree of challenge and risk while using outdoor skills. Private property, recreation and residential development at the perimeter, and dispersed recreation use along streams limit the experience of adventure, excitement, challenge, initiative or self-reliance in portions of the area.

#### *Other Features of Value*

There is likely a prehistoric trail in the area. A portion of the Alder Creek Giant Sequoia Grove is within the eastern edge of the unit. The area contains western pond turtle, Springville clarkia, Pierpoint Springs' dudleya, Meadow star-tulip and a portion of a Giant Sequoia Grove.

#### *Manageability*

The manageability concerns are the numerous access and mechanical maintenance needs associated with the special use permits in the unit. Thirty percent of the area is within a Wild Urban Interface Defense Zone and 63 percent is within a Threat Zone. Achieving the desired vegetative modification goals would be difficult, if actions to achieve these goals are limited to natural fire.

## Summary of Potential Suitability for Inclusion in the National Wilderness Preservation System

The potential for suitability for inclusion is low. This is because of the effects of human intervention, limited primitive opportunity and solitude, as well as manageability problems. The area's wilderness characteristics are impacted by many developments associated with the currently permitted uses. Opportunities for solitude are very limited. Although the area appears natural to the casual visitor it has been impacted by grazing, fire suppression and nonnative invasive species.

This polygon presents a limited opportunity to protect ecological groups that may be minimally represented in the National Wilderness Preservation System. There are no ecological groups with less than 5 percent of their national extent in the National Wilderness Preservation System. Ecological groups with between 10 and 20 percent of their national extent in the National Wilderness Preservation System comprise 2,045 acres. (For map see Exhibit B – Sequoia National Forest Evaluation Maps – Evaluation Map C.)

### **Polygon 190 (Dennison Peak)**

#### **General Description**

Polygon 190 is a mid-elevation mountainous area composed primarily of chaparral, oak woodlands and mixed conifers in the Dennison Peak area. The polygon is north of Tulare County Road 276, which is a paved road. Due to the width of the road, scenic overlook pullouts are limited. Much of the unit is visible from the county road and foothill and valley communities. The unit is 7,100 acres of land that is a deformed, oblong shape. The polygon is within an inventoried roadless area, the Giant Sequoia National Monument, adjacent to Sequoia National Park and adjacent to an area of Forest Service recommended wilderness.

National Vegetation Classification System data indicates less than 1 percent of the area of the polygon (14 acres) consists of ecological groups that have less than 5 percent of their national extent protected in the National Wilderness Preservation System. This polygon also contains 7 ecological groups with a total area of 2,530 acres which have less than 20 percent of their national extent protected in the National Wilderness Preservation System. The most prevalent are Mediterranean California mesic mixed conifer forest and woodland and Mediterranean California mixed oak woodland.

#### **Wilderness Characteristics**

##### *Degree the Area Generally Appears to be Affected Primarily by the Forces of Nature*

The unit has been affected by human intervention. Fire suppression activities have led to denser stands of shade tolerant species and denser understory throughout the entire unit. The forested stand average age is lower than it would have been before fire suppression, while the brush field average age is higher.

There is one noticeable mine in the area and possibly others that are not noticeable (Good Hope Mines). There are two minor structures associated with the mine but they are not maintained. There is no motorized use in the unit. Portions of Forest Service Trail 29E16 cross the west side of the unit and Forest Service Trail 19S09 is along the southern edge. There are two special use permitted water lines within the unit. Immediately adjacent to this unit is a Forest Service recommended wilderness, National Park Service lands and developed private property. Approximately half of the unit is part of a grazing allotment, with some associated water troughs

and drift fences. There are nonnative species present. These include wild pigs, Italian thistle, Tocalote and annual noxious weeds.

#### *Opportunities for Solitude or Primitive and Unconfined Recreation*

There may be some primitive recreation opportunity, although historically little recreation use has occurred. Approximately half the unit is covered with dense vegetation (shrub fields) and in some areas would not be penetrable without major clearing of vegetation (cross country travel would be difficult). The eastern portion of the unit is very steep and rugged and would be difficult to transverse by users.

The potential for solitude is high, away from adjacent roads and trails. While some areas within the interior are screened from sight, views of private property, roads and the San Joaquin valley development is frequent at higher elevations. Solitude and unconfined recreation with a sense of privacy is limited in this unit.

#### *Other Features of Value*

There are likely prehistoric/historic sites and trails in the area. A small portion of the Dillonwood and Dennison Giant Sequoia Groves are within the eastern edge of the unit (the rest of the grove is on Park Service lands). There are scenic granite outcrops in the unit.

#### **Manageability**

Reintroducing ecological condition that would normally be associated with the area without human intervention would require the use of fire. This could be accomplished at higher elevations, but would be risky at lower elevations where the polygon boundary is shared with private land uses. Controlling motorized use within the unit would be difficult where the unit is adjacent to roads, due to the number of access points and the difficulty in patrolling. There are also 2 special use permits for water pipes that would need to be considered.

Twelve percent of the area is within a Wild Urban Interface Defense Zone and 52 percent is within a Threat Zone. Achieving the desired vegetative modification goals would be difficult, if actions to achieve these goals are limited to natural fire.

#### **Summary of Potential Suitability for Inclusion in the National Wilderness Preservation System**

The potential for suitability for inclusion is low. This is because of the effects of human intervention on vegetation condition and manageability problems associated with the need to protect adjacent private property from wildland fire. It is an inventoried roadless area. The unit is adjacent to National Park Service lands and near Forest Service recommended wilderness contained in the Giant Sequoia National Monument Plan Record of Decision that is adjacent to the Golden Trout Wilderness.

The reintroduction of a more natural fire regime would restore the ecosystem to the original vegetative look and provide enhanced habitat opportunities to the plants and animals within the unit. However, relying on natural fire ignition to achieve this goal would be difficult where the unit shares a boundary with private property.

This polygon presents a limited opportunity to protect ecological groups that may be minimally represented in the National Wilderness Preservation System. Ecological groups with less than 5 percent of their national extent in the National Wilderness Preservation System comprise a low number of acres. Ecological groups with between 10 and 20 percent of their national extent in the

National Wilderness Preservation System comprise 2,530 acres. (For map see Exhibit B – Sequoia National Forest Evaluation Maps – Evaluation Map C.)

## **Polygon 227 (Oat Mountain)**

### **General Description**

Polygon 227 is a low elevation, mountainous area consisting primarily of oak woodland and brush located along the lower reaches of the Kings River. The area is 15,538 acres of land shaped somewhat like a question mark. It is not contiguous with other wilderness areas and is bounded by private property on much of its southern boundary and forest system roads that access a fire lookout, radio facility, and developed recreation facilities along the Kings River in the east. The Pine Flat Reservoir forms the North West boundary. The narrow “L” shape provides maximum exposure of the land area to uses outside of the unit. It is adjacent to the Giant Sequoia National Monument.

National Vegetation Classification System data indicates less than 1 percent of the area of the polygon (16 acres) consists of ecological groups that have less than 5 percent of their national extent protected in the National Wilderness Preservation System. This polygon also contains 8 ecological groups with a total area of 11,961 acres which have less than 20 percent of their national extent protected in the National Wilderness Preservation System. The most prevalent are California Central Valley mixed oak savanna, California lower montane blue oak-foothill pine woodland, Mediterranean California mixed oak woodland, and Mediterranean California mesic mixed conifer forest and woodland.

### **Wilderness Characteristics**

#### *Degree the Area Generally Appears to be Affected Primarily by the Forces of Nature*

There is very little recreation use, mainly hunters in the fall, due to limited access, steep terrain and limited amenities. The area is visited by cattle permittees in the course of managing their livestock and livestock infrastructure. The only developments within the area are Level 1 roads, livestock structures, and unmaintained trails. The west end of the area is adjacent to a power transmission line. On the east boundary there is a fire lookout and radio facility. There is one private inholding with access roads open to all vehicles including OHVs.

The area has been affected by cattle grazing, fire suppression, nonnative feral pigs and areas of invasive plants. The overall character of the area appears natural.

#### *Opportunities for Solitude or Primitive and Unconfined Recreation*

There is little current visitation to this area and some opportunities for solitude. However, solitude in some portions of the area is impacted by adjacent activities occurring on private land, adjacent land uses, motorized activity on roads within the boundary and along the boundary, the sights and sounds of adjacent activities on the Kings River and the sights and sounds of activities on the Pine Flat Reservoir.

#### *Other Features of Value*

There are no unique or high value special resources that contribute to the wilderness characteristics of the area.

## Manageability

Adjacent private land uses and the location of the unit (close to urban populations with expanding demands) would make management as wilderness difficult. There is a private edge holding on the northwestern boundary that create an odd shape; and the narrow shape of the unit as a whole maximizes the area exposed to activities on the boundaries that are not conducive to wilderness management. Activities are those associated with motorized use, developed facilities, utilities, administrative sites, and multiple forms of recreation use that is not primitive or unconfined in nature. There is also a large private inholding in the center of the eastern portion of the area.

## Summary of Potential Suitability for Inclusion in the National Wilderness Preservation System

The area has some wilderness characteristics but would be very difficult to manage as wilderness because of its location relative to human influences and its shape. The area appears natural but is inhabited by invasive plants and feral pigs. The area has little development but has an adjacent electrical transmission line, fire lookout, communication site, developed recreation sites along the Kings River, and a private inholding with access roads. These adjacent activities influence and reduce the opportunities for solitude or primitive and unconfined recreation. This polygon presents a moderate opportunity to protect ecological groups that may be minimally represented in the National Wilderness Preservation System. Ecological groups with less than 5 percent of their national extent in the National Wilderness Preservation System comprise a low number of acres. Ecological groups with between 10 and 20 percent of their national extent in the National Wilderness Preservation System, however, comprise 11,961 acres. (For map see Exhibit B – Sequoia National Forest Evaluation Maps – Evaluation Map A.)

## Polygon 1364 (North of Coffee Camp)

### General Description

This elongated and roughly triangular polygon is approximately 9,203 acres with elevations beginning at 1,500 and climbing to over 5,000 feet. The steep and divided terrain is rocky, dominated by lower elevation brush, chaparral, and oak woodlands with some mixed conifer at the highest elevations. The western boundary is the forest boundary just outside of the town of Springville, a landscape dominated by rural residences and ranches with a small area of Bureau of Land Management land. Heavily traveled roads bound the long sides of the polygon and access a variety of developed recreation facilities and the mountain communities of Camp Nelson, Pier Point and Sequoia Crest. The southern boundary follows the Middle Fork and the North Fork Middle Fork of the Tule River. The eastern tip of the polygon is adjacent to the Moses recommended wilderness. The river and a nearby state forest attract heavy recreation use to day-use sites and campgrounds as well as dispersed recreation areas during the summer and fall recreation season. The entire polygon is within the Giant Sequoia National Monument.

National Vegetation Classification System data indicates less than 1 percent of the area of the polygon (18 acres) consists of ecological groups that have less than 5 percent of their national extent protected in the National Wilderness Preservation System. This polygon also contains eight ecological groups with a total area of 3,514 acres which have less than 20 percent of their national extent protected in the National Wilderness Preservation System. The most prevalent is Mediterranean California mixed oak woodland.

## Wilderness Characteristics

### *Degree the Area Generally Appears to be Affected Primarily by the Forces of Nature*

Human manipulation has occurred in the area through grazing, fuel reduction projects and fire suppression. These activities have altered the composition and succession of the native plant community encouraging nonnative invasive species and altering the role of fire. Upstream management has caused sediment problems although soil conditions are stable. Air quality is poor due to agricultural, transportation and urban influences from areas outside of the forest. Improvements and infrastructure for human uses such as range improvements, a functioning water flume, a communications tower, roads and utilities infrastructure are maintained under special uses permits. Water rights are established for all streams and supply local communities and a hydropower plant.

The undeveloped characteristics of the polygon has been disturbed by infrastructure for utilities needed in local communities with cleared right of ways, range improvements for three grazing permits, and a semi-active quartz mine. Frequent access to these uses is provided on roads. There is a communication tower and a large flume which runs the length of the polygon and delivers water to a power plant. Numerous grazing-related improvements such as fences and water troughs are present. Highway 190, Wishon Road and Bear Creek Road form the boundary with 2 heavily used day use recreation areas, a developed campground and cabin rental, utilities infrastructure and industrial uses on the edge but not within the polygon. The Mountain Home State Forest on the northern boundary has multiple developed recreation facilities. Water rights are established for all streams.

The composition and succession of the native plant community is altered, encouraging nonnative invasive species and altering the role of fire. Tocalote is very prevalent across the area, along with invasive thistles and nonnative grasses including cheat grass. Their presence is generally increasing. Upstream management has caused sediment problems although soil conditions are stable, and air quality is poor from human influences outside of the area. There is one threatened and endangered species. Streams and vegetation provide wildlife connectivity and there are no reported feral species.

### *Opportunities for Solitude or Primitive and Unconfined Recreation*

Numerous improvements and infrastructure within the area needed for special use permits have disturbed the opportunities for solitude or primitive and unconfined recreation in the area. A communication tower and a flume which carries water to the power plant are visible, and frequent access to these facilities must be provided. A quartz mine is lightly active and semi-noticeable. Highway 190, Wishon Road and Bear Creek Road provide access to two heavily used day use recreation areas and two developed campgrounds adjacent to the area, increasing the probability of encounters with other visitors.

### *Other Features of Value*

The area is very typical of foothill communities on the west side of the Sierra Nevada. There is one threatened and endangered species.

## Manageability

The eastern tip of the polygon is adjacent to the proposed Moses Wilderness, while the northern and southern boundaries are bounded by highways that provide access to recreation developments, mountain communities and rural residences. Utilities infrastructure and industrial uses are on the edge of Highway 190, Wishon Road, and Bear Creek Road. Private property

bounds the western base of the triangle just north of the community of Springville. Views to the north and west are of development outside the area. There are a number of legal easements for the flume, access roads and utilities. There is 1 private inholding with a private access road. There are existing water rights on all streams in the area, 3 active grazing allotments and multiple special use permits. Wilderness characteristics are lacking and are not likely to be restored due to the uses of lands adjacent to the polygon. The elongated shape with heavily used roads on the long boundaries, the proximity to private land, communities, past use and multiple special use permits makes the management of this area as a wilderness difficult. Fuels reduction to protect private property and protect the objects of interest in the Giant Sequoia National Monument would affect wilderness management. Residential development and community growth may require installation of new communication structures, and flume capacity may be increased to expand domestic water supply.

### **Summary of Potential Suitability for Inclusion in the National Wilderness Preservation System**

The close proximity to residential and rural landscapes, roads, special use permits for nonrecreational uses, and a multitude of popular developed recreation sites affects opportunities for solitude or primitive and unconfined recreation. The steep terrain, low elevation cover and elongated shape of the polygon do not screen the heavily traveled roads on the south and north boundaries. The water flume, utility lines and residences are pervasive and further influence the lack of opportunity for solitude or an area free of permanent improvement or modern human occupation. Due to the proximity of local communities, visitor use is high and concentrated, mostly near the edges and encounters are likely. Residential development and community growth may require installation of new communication structures, and flume capacity may need to be increased to expand domestic water supply. This polygon presents a limited opportunity to protect ecological groups that may be minimally represented in the National Wilderness Preservation System. Ecological groups with less than 5 percent of their national extent in the National Wilderness Preservation System comprise a low number of acres. Ecological groups with between 10 and 20 percent of their national extent in the National Wilderness Preservation System comprise 3,514 acres. (For map see Exhibit B – Sequoia National Forest Evaluation Maps – Evaluation Map C.)

### **Polygon 1377 (Adjacent to Monarch Wilderness)**

#### **General Description**

Polygon 1377 is a mid to high elevation, mountainous area primarily of mixed conifer with giant sequoia groves located along the Kings River. The area includes several sequoia groves that amount to a few thousand acres. The area is 11,559 acres of land with a long, somewhat narrow shape and is located entirely within the Giant Sequoia National Monument. It is contiguous with the Monarch Wilderness and the eastern boundary is adjacent to Sequoia and Kings Canyon National Parks. The southern half of the area has a significant history of timber harvest and associated roads and plantations. There are several private property parcels along the southern boundary that have been excluded from the polygon, which influences the shape of the boundary

National Vegetation Classification System data indicates 1 percent of the area of the polygon (85 acres) consists of ecological groups that have less than 5 percent of their national extent protected in the National Wilderness Preservation System. This polygon also contains four ecological groups with a total area of 2,702 acres which have less than 20 percent of their national extent

protected in the National Wilderness Preservation System. The most prevalent is Mediterranean California mesic mixed conifer forest and woodland.

### Wilderness Characteristics

#### *Degree the Area Generally Appears to be Affected Primarily by the Forces of Nature*

The northern 50 percent of the area shows very little indication of intrusion by humans and is very lightly visited by recreationists. The overall character of the area appears natural and includes a few thousand acres of giant sequoia groves and the Windy Gulch Geologic area. This is a highly scenic and natural appearing area. Ecological integrity is largely intact and there has been little effect to natural plant, wildlife, watershed and soils conditions.

The southern half of the area has a significant history of timber harvest and associated Level 1 roads and plantations. There are several private property parcels along the southern boundary that have been oddly shaped out of the area.

The only developments within the area are Level 1 roads and trails. The roads are all located in the southern portion of the area and are associated with past timber harvest activity. There is one electronic site that is on the boundary of the area, accessed by an existing road.

#### *Opportunities for Solitude or Primitive and Unconfined Recreation*

The northern 50 percent of the area, mainly the Agnew Inventoried Roadless Area, provides some opportunities for solitude.

#### *Other Features of Value*

The area includes a few thousand acres of Giant Sequoia groves. There is also a portion of the Windy Gulch Geologic area which includes limestone caverns.

### Manageability

The area is adjacent to the Monarch Wilderness, includes the Agnew Inventoried Roadless Area, and is adjacent to Sequoia and Kings Canyon National Parks. The majority of the area would be manageable as an extension of the existing wilderness. The southern 50 percent of the area is significantly impacted by past timber harvest activity and includes many plantations and Level 1 roads. This part of the area would be difficult to manage as wilderness due to the extensive road access and potential for future fuels management needs in the plantations.

### Summary of Potential Suitability for Inclusion in the National Wilderness Preservation System

The area is adjacent to the Monarch Wilderness, includes the Agnew Roadless area, and is adjacent to Sequoia and Kings Canyon National Parks and is located entirely within the Giant Sequoia National Monument. Part of the area would be manageable as an extension of the existing wilderness. The southern 50 percent of the area is significantly impacted by past timber harvest activity and includes many plantations and Level 1 roads. This part of the area would be difficult to manage as wilderness due to the extensive road access and potential for future fuels management needs in the plantations. Reshaping the area to eliminate the southern 50 percent would make it more manageable and improve the overall wilderness character. This polygon presents a limited opportunity to protect ecological groups that may be minimally represented in the National Wilderness Preservation System. Ecological groups with less than 5 percent of their national extent in the National Wilderness Preservation System comprise a low number of acres.

Ecological groups with between 10 and 20 percent of their national extent in the National Wilderness Preservation System comprise 2,702 acres. (For map see Exhibit B – Sequoia National Forest Evaluation Maps – Evaluation Map B.)

### **Polygon 1378 (Adjacent to John Muir and Monarch Wildernesses)**

This polygon crosses the forest boundary between the Sequoia National Forest and the Sierra National Forest. The polygon was evaluated as one whole unit containing the portions on both forests. The polygon narrative can be found in the Sierra National Forest section of this evaluation document. (For map see Exhibit C – Sierra National Forest Evaluation Maps – Evaluation Map C or Exhibit B – Sequoia National Forest Evaluation Maps – Evaluation Map A)

### **Polygon 1380 (Adjacent to Jennie Lakes Wilderness and Sequoia and Kings Canyon National Parks Wilderness)**

#### **General Description**

Polygon 1380 is a mid-elevation mountainous area primarily of mixed conifer vegetation located long the Generals Highway, the main access to Sequoia and Kings Canyon National Parks. The area is 1,316 acres. It is contiguous with a roadless area, the Jennie Lakes Wilderness and Sequoia and Kings Canyon National Parks Wilderness Areas and is entirely within the Giant Sequoia National Monument. The area is heavily used by visitors to the 4 adjacent developed campgrounds. A major access highway to Sequoia and Kings Canyon National Parks borders the area on the southwestern side.

National Vegetation Classification System data indicates 3 percent of the area of the polygon (43 acres) consists of ecological groups that have less than 5 percent of their national extent protected in the National Wilderness Preservation System. This polygon also contains 3 ecological groups with a total area of 239 acres which have less than 20 percent of their national extent protected in the National Wilderness Preservation System.

#### **Wilderness Characteristics**

##### *Degree the Area Generally Appears to be Affected Primarily by the Forces of Nature*

The area contains past timber harvest activity and associated Level 1 roads and plantations. The shape of this area excludes four campgrounds and a major access road to Sequoia and Kings Canyon National Parks. The only developments within the area are Level 1 roads. There is evidence of adjacent campgrounds and a highway in some portions of the area.

The area has been affected by timber harvest, cattle grazing and fire suppression. The overall character of the area appears somewhat natural. The unharvested forest provides valuable wildlife habitat and good water quality. The plant and wildlife communities are largely unaffected except in the areas of past timber harvest.

##### *Opportunities for Solitude or Primitive and Unconfined Recreation*

The area appears somewhat natural in condition however, noise from adjacent heavily used campgrounds and roads nearby would not allow for solitude or primitive and unconfined recreation much of the time. The area does not provide a sense of leaving civilization behind due to adjacent recreation use, the highway and past timber harvest activity and roads.

### *Other Features of Value*

There are no unique or high value special resources that contribute to the wilderness characteristics of the area.

### Manageability

Cherry-stemmed roads, adjacent campgrounds, past timber harvest activity, high visitor use, and signs of civilization from the Generals Highway would make this a difficult area to manage for wilderness character.

### Summary of Potential Suitability for Inclusion in the National Wilderness Preservation System

Wilderness characteristics are significantly affected by adjacent campgrounds and highway. Evidence of past manipulations from timber harvest activity detracts from a feeling of wilderness. It would be a difficult area to manage for wilderness character. This polygon does not present an opportunity to protect ecological groups that may be minimally represented in the National Wilderness Preservation System. Ecological groups with less than 5 percent of their national extent in the National Wilderness Preservation System comprise a low number of acres. Ecological groups with between 10 and 20 percent of their national extent in the National Wilderness Preservation System comprise 239 acres. (For map see Exhibit B – Sequoia National Forest Evaluation Maps – Evaluation Map B.)

## **Polygon 1381 (Beartrap Meadow – Adjacent to Sequoia and Kings Canyon National Parks Wilderness)**

### General Description

Polygon 1381 is a mid-elevation mountainous area with primarily oak conifer grading into mixed conifer forests. General's Highway 198 which provides access into the forest and to Sequoia and Kings Canyon National Park from Visalia is to the north, adjacent to the unit. The unit is 1,317 acres of land shaped somewhat like an adze. It is contiguous with the National Park Service wilderness. It is within the Giant Sequoia National Monument. Stony Creek runs down through the unit and many openings and patches of trees along trails.

National Vegetation Classification System data indicates 1 percent of the area of the polygon (13 acres) consists of ecological groups that have less than 5 percent of their national extent protected in the National Wilderness Preservation System. This polygon also contains 4 ecological groups with a total area of 237 acres which have less than 20 percent of their national extent protected in the National Wilderness Preservation System.

### Wilderness Characteristics

#### *Degree the Area Generally Appears to be Affected Primarily by the Forces of Nature*

Two-thirds of the unit is unaffected by intentional human manipulation. Although the remaining third had fuels management and some logging, it is not noticeable due to exposed granite balds, cliffs and streams with granitic outcrops in the area. The area currently has apiary special use permits. The area has experienced fire despite 100 years of active fire suppression. The vegetative community that now exists would appear appropriate to a casual recreational visitor. Thirty-percent of the area has been affected by past timber or fuels management. The overall character of the area appears natural despite these past effects. Stony Creek drainage contains bedrock granite creeks and swimming holes. Many historic and prehistoric archaeological sites exist. There are

remains of the old pack station at the Stony Creek Resort site. Historic early 1900s African American Buffalo Soldier military units were known to camp here.

The only developments within the area are a Level 2 road and several Level 1 roads. Access roads from previous timber clearing operations are not obtrusive. Adjacent recreational developments are up the hill from much of the unit and the road is a busy road in the summer months. However, much of the unit is screened from the road by topography and trees. Immediately adjacent to this unit on the northern edge are several developed recreational facilities along Highway 198, a major highway corridor that provides entry into the adjacent Sequoia and Kings Canyon National Park. There are no grazing, mining or administrative facilities. The majority of the unit does not have any substantial development.

#### *Opportunities for Solitude or Primitive and Unconfined Recreation*

Given the steepness of the topography, there is minimal recreational use on the steeper slopes. There is quite a bit of hiking and mountain biking use during the summer months on the old timber roads. There are no system trails within the unit. This unit is contiguous with the National Park Service wilderness along one boundary.

Highway 198 is a major tourist travel route during the summer months into Sequoia and Kings Canyon National Park. There are several campgrounds along this road, adjacent to this unit. Traffic noise along the highway corridor creates an atmosphere where the feeling of remote solitude is not possible. Portions of the area are very steep in parts and shielded from the noise of Highway 198.

#### *Other Features of Value*

Stony Creek drainage has bedrock granite creeks and swimming holes. Many historic and prehistoric archaeological sites exist. There are the remains of an old pack station at the Stony Creek Resort site. Historic early 1900s African American Buffalo Soldier military units were known to camp here.

#### **Manageability**

Level 2 roads would need restoration to convert to a trail or to be decommissioned and the area restored. Access from Highway 198 is easy.

#### **Summary of Potential Suitability for Inclusion in the National Wilderness Preservation System**

With the exception of roads and past timber harvest activity the wilderness characteristics of this area are somewhat intact. It is contiguous to the National Park Service wilderness and within the Giant Sequoia National Monument. Given the steepness and remoteness of the terrain it has no mining, trails, and little grazing. There is only 1 Level 2 road that has been identified as possibly needing restoration in parts or conversion to trail. The proximity to Highway 198 on the northern boundary has limited impacts to solitude in that immediate area, but these are not noticeable to the average visitor as they climb higher in the unit.

This unit is contiguous with the National Park Service wilderness along one boundary. It has a unique character to it with Stony Creek and Woodward Creek cascading down through the unit and many openings and patches of trees along trails. Several Forest Service roads could be converted to trails or decommissioned and the area restored.

The area appears natural for the most part with secondary growth conifer. The area is important for habitat connectivity for the Pacific Fisher as well as multiple species of slender salamander. This polygon does not present an opportunity to protect ecological groups that may be minimally represented in the National Wilderness Preservation System. Ecological groups with less than 5 percent of their national extent in the National Wilderness Preservation System comprise a low number of acres. Ecological groups with between 10 and 20 percent of their national extent in the National Wilderness Preservation System comprise 237 acres. (For map see Exhibit B – Sequoia National Forest Evaluation Maps – Evaluation Map B.)

## **Polygon 1384 (Cannel Peak)**

### **General Description**

Polygon 1384 is a north-south trending transitional unit that extends from the Kern River Canyon up steep brush-shrouded slopes to the lip and beyond to the adjacent Kern Plateau. It rises to a maximum elevation of approximately 9,500 feet at Cannell Peak. It is a complex unit that has three subpolygons identified within it. Existing mechanized and motorized opportunities are present within this unit.

Subpolygon 1384.1 is 6,267 acres in size and includes the Rincon Motorcycle Trail, the high use Packsaddle Limestone Cave geological area and a hydroelectric impoundment along Salmon Creek. It is located on the low-elevation, densely brushed edge of the analysis area adjacent to the Kern River road corridor and is contiguous with that area. It is also adjacent to locations of extremely high developed and undeveloped recreation use along the Kern River. This area generates much of the recreational noise in the unit and is not conducive to any kind of solitary recreational experience. Much mining is also located within polygon 6.1.

Subpolygon 1384.2 is 2,433 acres in size and has motorized access that is permitted to allow visitation and maintenance to a number and variety of long-standing permitted special uses. It is also located on the edge of the analysis area adjacent to the Kern River Road corridor and is contiguous with that area.

Subpolygon 1384.3 is 30,930 acres in size and encompasses much of the Cannell Roadless Analysis area. It is a north-south trending unit that is lozenge in shape approximately 13 miles north-south and 5 miles east-west with an incredible diversity of plants and animals related to elevation. A portion of the western border lies adjacent to locations of extremely high developed and undeveloped recreation use along the Kern River. This adjacent use generates much of the vehicular and other recreational sights and sounds in the western portion of the unit and is not conducive to any kind of solitary recreational experience. The western border consists of steep, densely brushed slopes and ravines just above the Kern River which rises to form the western lip of the Kern Plateau. The brush fields give way to open stands of oak and pine that rise further to break into an open plateau with open pine stands adjacent to huge open grassy meadows. Stands of the endemic Piute cypress (only one of 13 stands known to exist in the Kern River Valley) exist within the unit. The large open wet meadows of the Kern Plateau also provide prime habitat for several species of salamanders and the mountain yellow-legged frog.

National Vegetation Classification System data, based on the polygon size of 39,629 acres, indicates 7 percent of the area of the polygon (2,968 acres) consists of ecological groups that have less than 5 percent of their national extent protected in the National Wilderness Preservation System. The most prevalent are Inter-Mountain Basin big sagebrush shrublands and Inter-Mountain Basin big sagebrush steppe. This polygon also contains 7 ecological groups with a total

area of 7,893 acres which have less than 20 percent of their national extent protected in the National Wilderness Preservation System. The most prevalent are California lower montane blue oak-foothill pine woodland, Great Basin pinyon-juniper woodland, Mediterranean California mesic mixed conifer forest and woodland and Mediterranean California mixed oak woodland.

The Kern Plateau is accessed by one main road and, with the exception of groomed snowmobile trails; recreation visitation on the Plateau is limited to the summer and fall months. Recreational users consist of day hikers and backpackers along the trails as well as horse parties, particularly near the open grassy meadows located on the high-elevation plateau. The plateau is well-watered and quite lovely with an incredible diversity of plants and animals that is attractive to hikers and other close-to-the-ground recreational enthusiasts such as photographers and painters. Increasingly, there is a community interest in building new off highway vehicle routes across and through the Kern Plateau, so there is growing recreational interest in this area.

Prehistoric sites are numerous in the area. The open grassy meadows were a magnet to early livestock grazers and its' primary history is related to that use. There is some historic mining along the northern periphery of the unit but most of that is at least 50 years old and were feeble attempts to identify tungsten deposits to support World War II steel strengthening efforts. Most exploratory holes are healing over and not noticeable. Logging has been limited to the past 40 years and evidence of that is fading fast in the well-watered luxuriant forest of the Kern Plateau.

### Wilderness Characteristics

#### *Degree the Area Generally Appears to be Affected Primarily by the Forces of Nature*

Ninety percent of the unit is unaffected by intentional human manipulation. These impacts include timber removal and some mining exploration in the northern quarter of the unit. Grazing in the unit has been an ongoing use since its' earliest historic times. There are some troughs and fence lines that exist within the unit that could be removed. There are approximately 10 miles of roads on 5 short spurs that access the unit from the Cherry Hill road that have been deemed "not-likely necessary" that could be obliterated. With the exception of grazing, there are no other permitted special uses or hydroelectric developments. There are no recreational developments with the exception of one hiking trail that accesses Salmon Creek Falls, which is a spectacular water fall during high water years.

For the most part this unit is lightly developed including 2 system trails, some permitted fences and troughs related to the grazing permit and healing scars from old timber sales and mining in the northern quarter of the unit.

The entire unit appears natural and undisturbed. The old healing scars from the timber sales and exploratory mining are not noticeable to the casual recreational user. It is important habitat for several species of slender salamander, mountain yellow-legged frog and for Piute pines in the lower elevations.

#### *Opportunities for Solitude or Primitive and Unconfined Recreation*

On the steep, brushy slopes adjacent to the Kern River, solitude is almost impossible given the crowds of recreationists along the river but half upslope and onto the Kern Plateau the opportunity for quiet and solitude are greatly enhanced, even during the peak recreational visitation months in the summer.

### *Other Features of Value*

Salmon Creek Falls is a spectacular waterfall during years of high rainfall. The variety of plants and animals in the area is extraordinary as the elevation changes so dramatically from 4,400 feet to 9,500 feet at the top of Cannell Peak. Habitat preservation for such animals as slender salamanders, yellow-legged frogs and the Piute cypress are important in this unit as well. Two popular recreation settings included Brush Creek, a popular whitewater run for kayakers with an annual event and Rincon motorcycle trail.

### Manageability

Challenges to manageability would include limited opportunities to provide solitude and potential for wilderness incursions, based on a high frequency of military overflights, extremely high recreation and vehicle use along the Kern River and Mountain Highway 99, along the western portion of the area, motorized and mechanized trails, including one National Recreation Trail within the boundary, and the presence of roads immediately adjacent to or within the boundary of the area.

### Summary of Potential Suitability for Inclusion in the National Wilderness Preservation System

Wilderness characteristics of this area are largely intact with the following exceptions. There are high levels of recreational visitation along the western boundary that adjoins the Kern River corridor. The northern quarter of the unit has healing scars from past logging and mining that are rapidly disappearing. Grazing is important on the plateau and there are small fence lines and troughs associated with permitted livestock use. Military training overflights are a common occurrence in this area. The unit has a rich archaeological history and was and is used extensively by the Tubatulabal Tribe who accessed the plateau from Fay Ranch in the lowlands to the south. It has a rich prehistoric and historic history that belays the fact that it is in almost pristine condition today. This polygon presents a moderate opportunity to protect ecological groups that may be minimally represented in the National Wilderness Preservation System. Ecological groups with less than 5 percent of their national extent in the National Wilderness Preservation System comprise nearly 3,000 acres. Ecological groups with between 10 and 20 percent of their national extent in the National Wilderness Preservation System comprise 7,893 acres. (For map see Exhibit B – Sequoia National Forest Evaluation Maps – Evaluation Map E.)

## **Polygon 1385 (Jennie Lakes Roadless – Adjacent to Jennie Lakes Wilderness)**

### General Description

Polygon 1385 is a moderately high elevation mountainous area contiguous with Jennie Lakes Wilderness and National Park Service wilderness. Vegetation is mixed conifer forests interspersed with meadows and streams. The unit rises up toward wilderness, is in the Giant Sequoia National Monument, and much of the area is within the Jennie Lakes Inventoried Roadless Area. The unit is 8,216 acres, and a very narrow and long oblong shape with cherry stem roads to wilderness trailheads. The Jennie Lakes Wilderness forms one long side on the south, Big Meadow Road, FS 14S11 forms the other long, north boundary, the National Parks Service Wilderness on the short south side, and Generals Highway on the other short (east) boundary. Multiple popular, developed recreation sites line Generals Highway and Big Meadows Road on the boundary. Motorized and mechanized opportunities are available on multiple objective level one roads that are operational level two roads. These roads provide popular and valued OHV opportunities and are identified on the motor vehicle use map. This area is popular for dispersed camping among

OHV enthusiasts. National Vegetation Classification System data indicates less than 1 percent of the area of the polygon (49 acres) consists of ecological groups that have less than 5 percent of their national extent protected in the National Wilderness Preservation System. This polygon also contains 3 ecological groups with a total area of less than 50 acres which have less than 20 percent of their national extent protected in the National Wilderness Preservation System.

## Wilderness Characteristics

### *Degree the Area Generally Appears to be Affected Primarily by the Forces of Nature*

Half of the unit is unaffected by intentional human manipulation. The remaining half had fuels management and past logging. In some areas these manipulations are noticeable to the casual visitor. The many recreational developments along Big Meadows Road receive heavy recreation use and include campgrounds, a recreation rental cabin and three popular trailheads (2 highly developed) and a developed pack station. Highway 198 borders a quarter mile section of the northern boundary and is a busy road in the summer months. Much of the unit is screened from roads and campgrounds by steep topography and trees. The area has experienced fire despite 100 years of active fire suppression. The long, narrow shape of the polygon with cherry stem roads, and the presence of many objective level one roads that are operational level 2 roads and the associated OHV use detract significantly from the apparent naturalness. Although the imprints of man's work is substantially noticeable along roads on the boundary, cherry stem roads, and roads used for OHV, the composition of plant and animal communities are intact, and the area appears to reflect ecological conditions. Vegetation is highly patchy despite infrequency of natural fire, and riparian areas and streams are in good condition despite dispersed camping near trails or roads. Purple mountain parsley, pygmy pussy paws, marten, and northern goshawk are found in the area. The area is rich in prehistoric Native American archaeological sites associated with trade trails.

### *Opportunities for Solitude or Primitive and Unconfined Recreation*

The area rises up toward Jennie Lakes Wilderness through the Jennie Lakes Roadless Area. Steep rough topography and vegetation shields the area from the noise of Highway 198 and from Big Meadow Road and allows the feeling of solitude in the areas closest to the Jennie Lakes Wilderness boundary. These areas exhibit natural character with many meadows, granite features, and forests along the trails. Big Meadows trail leads to Jennie Lakes Wilderness, a popular destination for hikers and horse riders.

Visitor use in lower elevations is high especially along existing Operational level 2 roads use for OHV activities and dispersed camping. The activity at the multiple developed recreation facilities on the boundary and the activity within the unit along roads eliminate opportunities for solitude or primitive and unconfined recreation in most of the unit. Traffic noise along the road and from campgrounds during the summer months as well as nearby private property would cause noise intrusion into any new wilderness.

### *Other Features of Value*

The area is rich in prehistoric Native American archaeological sites associated with trade trails. Big Meadow and a few viewpoints provide scenic value.

## Manageability

The area is easy to access by a transportation system which penetrates deep into the area. The roads and developed recreation facilities along the boundary receive heavy recreational use

associated with the popular national parks adjacent to the area. Highway 198 is the primary travel route into the forest and Sequoia and Kings Canyon National Park from Visalia and receives a large volume of traffic. Big Meadows Road with a large number of popular, developed recreation sites is adjacent to the unit. Wilderness management would be complicated by the large number of visitors utilizing facilities on the perimeter as well as the interior operational level 2 roads (objective level 1 roads).

### **Summary of Potential Suitability for Inclusion in the National Wilderness Preservation System**

The wilderness characteristics of this area are moderately intact. The steep, forested slopes offer some screening to the recreation activity along motorized routes and developed recreation facilities on the boundary. However the long, narrow shape bounded by popular recreation routes and multiple developed recreation facilities and cherry stem roads dividing the area maximize the exposure of the area to motorized travel and visitor activity, minimizing opportunities for solitude or primitive and unconfined recreation. Evidence of human manipulation through past timber harvest, fuel reduction projects, and the remnant access routes reduce the naturalness in some areas. The area is contiguous to the Jennie Lakes and National Park Wildernesses and provides habitat to a number of rare plants and animals as well as mule deer and bear. The area is important for habitat connectivity for mule deer and other wildlife. There is no mining, little grazing and a few Level 2 roads that possibly need restoration in parts to be fully converted to trails. There is some evidence of human manipulation that becomes less noticeable as the visitor rises in elevation away from roads. The area appears natural with mixed conifer forested areas. This polygon does not present an opportunity to protect ecological groups that may be minimally represented in the National Wilderness Preservation System. Ecological groups with less than 5 percent of their national extent in the National Wilderness Preservation System comprise a low number of acres. Ecological groups with between 10 and 20 percent of their national extent in the National Wilderness Preservation System comprise 50 acres. (For map see Exhibit B – Sequoia National Forest Evaluation Maps – Evaluation Map B.)

### **Polygon 1387 (North Fork Kern – Adjacent to Golden Trout Wilderness)**

#### **General Description**

Polygon 1387 is a mid to high elevation mountainous area dissected by the precipitous canyon of North Fork of the wild and scenic Kern River. As the terrain rises steeply out of the Kern Canyon, vegetation transitions from chaparral through oak-conifer to mixed conifers at higher elevations. The high point is the 10,000 feet Sherman Peak. The eastern side is in the Giant Sequoia National Monument and includes the Freeman Grove and Freeman Creek Botanical Area. The unit is 89,628 acres and shaped somewhat like a heart with the Golden Trout Wilderness forming the northern boundary and the “V” of the heart. This area intersects the Rincon Inventoried Roadless Area, Giant Sequoia National Monument and the Rincon Critical Aquatic Refuge.

National Vegetation Classification System data indicates 2 percent of the area of the polygon (1,751 acres) consists of ecological groups that have less than 5 percent of their national extent protected in the National Wilderness Preservation System. The most prevalent is Inter-Mountain Basin big sagebrush shrub land. This polygon also contains 6 ecological groups with a total area of 21,673 acres which have less than 20 percent of their national extent protected in the National Wilderness Preservation System. The most prevalent are California lower montane blue oak-foothill pine woodland, Great Basin pinyon-juniper woodland, Mediterranean California mesic

mixed conifer forest and woodland, Mediterranean California mixed oak woodland, and Rocky Mountain aspen forest and woodland.

## Wilderness Characteristics

### *Degree the Area Generally Appears to be Affected Primarily by the Forces of Nature*

This is an extremely large unit straddling the North Fork of the Kern River in an area of the river corridor known as the Forks Run. The level of human activity and influence varies greatly from the eastside to the west side of the North Fork. The majority of the unit on the eastern and northern sides is unaffected by humans. The unit on the west side has large areas of steep terrain interrupted with more rolling terrain with roads and recreation developments along cherry-stemmed roads. The roads, private in holdings, and developed facilities in the west reduce the natural quality. Access roads from previous timber clearing operations are most noticeable in this western area. The river corridor with steep-sided canyon walls is managed as a Wild and Scenic class “wild”, and is well insulated from the west side activities, has no developed facilities and extremely limited access even for foot travel and appears primarily affected by the forces of nature

On the east side of the river and in the area east of the Rincon Trail (33E23) and north of the Schaeffer Trail (33E24 and 33E26) there are several cherry stemmed motorized routes that dead end. There are also a number of short roads (spurs) on the perimeter of this rather large and deep area. Some of these perimeter spur roads are open to motorized use on the motor vehicle use map, however identified as not likely needed in Travel Management Subpart A. The interior is the most undisturbed section of this unit. This area is also adjacent to the Golden Trout Wilderness, an area that is part of the largest complex of unroaded lands in the Sierra Nevada. This large complex has great ecological diversity due to its wildness, size, and ranges in elevations.

The area south of the Schaeffer Trail and east of the Rincon Trail is a smaller elongated piece that is isolated from the northern portion by a popular motorized and bike trail which creates a highly valued loop recreation opportunity around the perimeter. This southern island is also not contiguous and is removed from the larger wilderness area mentioned above. This area also has more effects associated with modern human occupation and the expansion of the population due to location to Mountain 99, Sherman Pass Road, and other multiple uses.

The whole area has a natural fire regime which has shaped the vegetation. The vegetative community across the unit that now exists would not appear inappropriate to a casual recreational visitor. Access roads from previous timber clearing operations are not obtrusive. There are 2 active allotments and there is 1 vacant grazing allotment.

To the east, development is concentrated in the southeast close to Sherman Pass Road. A communications site at Sherman Peak has a Level 1 road at lower elevation and an unobtrusive access. Tungsten mines are also located in the same area near Sherman Pass Road but are not obvious to casual visitors and represent less than 1 percent of the area. There is no currently known mining activity. While range improvements such as fences, corrals and water troughs occur near some water sources in the area, they are unobtrusive. Several historic guard or mining cabins are present. One storage building under special use permit) trailheads, campgrounds, and a pack station occur along the edges. An inholding is present at West Meadow along the eastern side. On the east side of the river, all of these developments are along the edges and represent less than 1 percent of the overall area. There are no recreation improvements, ground return telephone lines, electric lines, power lines or other permanently installed linear right-of-way structures. Motorized and hiking trails are present in the area. Subpolygon 1387.4 has several motorized

trails including the Rincon Trail. Subpolygon 1387.1 has a motorized trail. Much of the recreation in the area other than motorized use is similar to that in the adjacent Golden Trout Wilderness. Large blocks of the unit are unaffected by humans.

Current motorized trails have damaged streams, riparian area and soils. Trails could be restored using horse and volunteers and converted to horse and hiking trails if this area became wilderness. Although the qualities of untrammled and undeveloped have been affected by motorized trails and other recreation developments, these would not be noticeable to the average visitor after the trails were improved so they do not negatively influence hydrologic and aquatic species connectivity and habitat. The overall character of the area appears natural with ecological integrity despite the impacts from developments. Fire is a natural part of the ecosystem and shapes vegetation. The area is important for habitat connectivity for the Pacific fisher, several species of slender salamander, mountain yellow-legged frogs and soon to be reintroduced Kern River rainbow trout. Species composition is generally the result of natural processes. Hydrologic, soils, riparian, stream and meadows conditions are good where no disturbance from motorized trails occurs. Meadows are stable and in fair to good condition. While trout stocking does occur in a few locations, native trout will be stocked as part of a species recovery effort in the near future, especially within streams protected from motorized trails by bridges or current wilderness. Air quality is fair to good.

#### *Opportunities for Solitude or Primitive and Unconfined Recreation*

Given the steepness of the topography, there is minimal recreational use on the steeper slopes providing opportunities for solitude. There is quite a bit of hiking, mountain biking and off highway vehicle use during the summer and holiday weekends on the motorized trails within the Rincon Inventoried Roadless Area and along trails reducing opportunities for solitude in these areas. Developed recreation facilities or services on the boundaries or cherry-stems include trailheads, campgrounds, a pack station, roads and organization camps mostly in the lower half or edges of the large 1387.4 subpolygon and around the Lloyd Road in the 1387.3 subpolygon create an atmosphere minimizing opportunities for primitive and unconfined recreation as well as solitude. Visitor use in the summer, organizational camps, and private inholdings reduce the opportunities for solitude as well as does the heliport along the boundary of subpolygon 1387.3. In times of active fire suppression activity, the number of helicopters coming and going out of the heliport could be quite disruptive to visitors. Conversely, the inclusion of this unit into the wilderness system would protect the audible qualities of large areas away from these roads. Two small communities and some private property also exist at the edges of subpolygon 1387.3. Potential encounters with other visitors are low throughout most of the polygon. Use is primarily confined to trails within the area, with concentrations of use along roads at the boundaries or cherry-stems.

#### *Other Features of Value*

Outstanding landscape features include waterfalls, pinnacles, granite domes, outstanding white water opportunities on the Kern River, columnar basalt flows on the Kern River and the Rincon Fault. Native species have connectivity and habitat in the areas away from the impacts of man. These include rare plants, mountain yellow-legged frog, Kern River rainbows, spotted owl, fisher and goshawk. The Freeman Creek Giant Sequoia grove is a treasure. Bonita Cabin is an historic guard cabin from the early 1900s, located near Bonita Meadow. The Embree Mine possesses 2 cabins and remnants of a mill. The size of the area will allow for its preservation and use in an unimpaired condition. Current visitor use is low with little chance of encounters with other visitors.

## Manageability

Lloyd Road 22S82 which is cherry-stemmed into the length of the western side, polygon 1378.3, provides valued access to a variety of developed and dispersed recreation opportunities during the spring, fall and summer recreation season. The extent of the development, road access, and the amount visitor use during the summer recreation season would make the west side very difficult to manage as a wilderness. The Forks of the Kern Trailhead is the access point to the Forks of the Kern, a world class whitewater boating experience. There is no authorized over snow vehicle use in subpolygon 1378.3. Motorized trails in subpolygon 1387.4 are important to the public. Sherman Pass road provides opportunities for access into the area trails.

In the area east of the Rincon Trail (33E23) and north of the Schaeffer Trail (33E24 and 33E26), the cherry stemmed motorized routes dead end and make this area most feasible for wilderness management. The motorized and mechanized activities along the perimeter and the southerly, elongated configuration that is not adjacent to the wilderness make the southern area less manageable as wilderness.

Trails could be restored using horse and volunteers and converted to horse and hiking trails if this area became wilderness.

## Summary of Potential Suitability for Inclusion in the National Wilderness Preservation System

The wilderness characteristics of this area are largely intact. It is contiguous to the Golden Trout Wilderness and Rincon Critical Aquatic Refuge and part is within the Giant Sequoia National Monument as well as Rincon Inventoried Roadless Area. Given the steepness and remoteness of the terrain, it has large areas with no effect from humans.

The one manageability concern is the management of the mines, private lands, trails and communication site. Areas adjacent to Sherman Pass Road, on the edge of the area, which has cherry-stemmed roads and land, could be removed from the unit.

Connectivity of aquatic habitat would be improved through conversion of motorized trails to horse and hiking trails within this proposed wilderness. This would allow for the restoration of suitable habitat and connectivity of habitat for mountain yellow-legged frogs (an endangered species) on a significant portion of the Kern Plateau above 4,000 feet. It would provide connectivity with existing frog populations in the Golden Trout Wilderness. The lower elevation of streams along the Kern River would have improved water quality and be better habitat for recovering Kern River rainbows if the trail crossings were restored. The polygon provides habitat connectivity and habitat for a number of rare plants and animals. A grove of important Giant Sequoia trees also grows within the unit. The natural fire regime governs the ecosystem and the result is natural processes that provide enhanced habitat opportunities to the rare plants and animals within the unit. This polygon presents an opportunity to protect ecological groups that may be minimally represented in the National Wilderness Preservation System. Ecological groups with less than 5 percent of their national extent in the National Wilderness Preservation System comprise 1,750 acres. Ecological groups with between 10 and 20 percent of their national extent in the National Wilderness Preservation System comprise an additional 21,673 acres. (For map see Exhibit B – Sequoia National Forest Evaluation Maps – Evaluation Map C and Evaluation Map D.)

## **Polygon 1390 (Osa Meadows – Adjacent to Golden Trout Wilderness)**

### **General Description**

Polygon 1390 is a high elevation steep mountainous area primarily of red fir and lodgepole pine stands on western facing slopes. The unit is 1,100 acres of land shaped somewhat like a crescent. The unit is contiguous and tucked into an irregular boundary of the Golden Trout Wilderness.

National Vegetation Classification System data indicates 4 percent of the area of the polygon (49 acres) consists of ecological groups that have less than 5 percent of their national extent protected in the National Wilderness Preservation System. This polygon also contains five ecological groups with a total area of 93 acres which have less than 20 percent of their national extent protected in the National Wilderness Preservation System.

### **Wilderness Characteristics**

#### *Degree the Area Generally Appears to be Affected Primarily by the Forces of Nature*

Ninety-five percent of the unit is unaffected by intentional human manipulation. The remaining 5 percent has been impacted by a wildfire and salvage logging operation on the eastern fringe of the unit. The old fire scars and access roads are healing and look natural. All of the old timber roads are closed and no longer needed. One hundred years of active fire suppression has impacted the nature and distribution of vegetation across the entire unit. The vegetative community that now exists would not appear inappropriate to a casual recreational visitor. The area has been closed to livestock grazing since 2005.

There are no developments within the area. Old access roads from a fire salvage timber sale are healing over and not readily noticeable.

5 percent of the unit has been affected by past salvage fire timber removal efforts and the entire unit has been impacted by a century of active fire suppression. The overall character of the area appears natural despite these past minor impacts. There may be some introduced fish in Osa Meadow Creek but that is unconfirmed.

#### *Opportunities for Solitude or Primitive and Unconfined Recreation*

Given the rugged topography and remoteness, there is minimal visitation and the opportunity for solitude is great. There is no noise from adjacent recreational developments.

#### *Other Features of Value*

This area is important for Native American values and a number of Native American prehistoric archaeological sites are known to exist in the area.

### **Manageability**

Since this polygon is almost entirely enclosed by the adjacent Golden Trout Wilderness, this unit would be easy to manage as an extension of the adjacent wilderness.

### **Summary of Potential Suitability for Inclusion in the National Wilderness Preservation System**

The wilderness characteristics are almost completely intact. It is contiguous to the Golden Trout Wilderness. There is no motorized use. The area appears natural for the most part with healing timber access roads and secondary growth timber.

The reintroduction of a more natural fire regime would restore the ecosystem to one whose appearance is the result of natural processes and provide enhanced habitat opportunities to the rare plants and animals within the unit. This polygon does not present an opportunity to protect ecological groups that may be minimally represented in the National Wilderness Preservation System. Ecological groups with less than 5 percent of their national extent in the National Wilderness Preservation System comprise a low number of acres. Ecological groups with between 10 and 20 percent of their national extent in the National Wilderness Preservation System comprise 93 acres. (For map see Exhibit B – Sequoia National Forest Evaluation Maps – Evaluation Map D.)

### **Polygon 1391 (South Sierra and Monache/Blackrock)**

This polygon crosses the forest boundary between the Sequoia National Forest and the Inyo National Forest. The polygon was evaluated as one whole unit containing the portions on both forests. The polygon narrative can be found in the Inyo National Forest section of this evaluation document. (For map see Exhibit B – Sequoia National Forest Evaluation Maps – Evaluation Map D and Exhibit A – Inyo National Forest Evaluation Maps – Evaluation Map I.)

### **Polygon 1391 (Monache, Blackrock and South Sierra East)**

#### **General Description**

Polygon 1391 (Monache, Blackrock and South Sierra East) consists of 51,033 acres with elevations ranging from 4,500 to 9,400 feet. This U-shaped polygon, connected by a narrow sliver that follows the Kennedy Meadows Road along the southern boundary, includes two distinct geographic areas divided by the South Sierra Wilderness. The western portion of the polygon includes the Monache and Blackrock area. The eastern portion of the polygon, located east of the South Sierra Wilderness, will be referred to as South Sierra East. This polygon crosses the forest boundary between the Sequoia National Forest and the Inyo National Forest. The polygon was evaluated as one whole unit containing the portions on both forests.

Monache and Blackrock, the northwest corner, is contiguous to the Golden Trout Wilderness and the eastern boundary is contiguous with the South Sierra Wilderness. It is located in the Monache area, between Monache Cabin on the north and Blackrock on the south. This portion of the polygon is irregularly shaped due to cherry-stem roads that protrude well into the polygon, splitting the polygon nearly in half in some places, particularly the cherry-stem road in the southern half of the polygon. There are also motorized trails present within the polygon, particularly in the southern half. The northern portion of the polygon intersects with the South Sierra Inventoried Roadless Area. Ecosystem types include red fir, sagebrush, subalpine forest and white fir. The topography includes gentle to moderate slopes.

South Sierra East, the southwest corner is contiguous to the Sacatar Trail Wilderness (Bureau of Land Management) and the western boundary is contiguous with the South Sierra Wilderness. Located east of the South Sierra Wilderness, the area includes Olancho Trailhead, Haiwee Pass Trailhead, Talus Canyon, Long Canyon, Tunawee Canyon and Kennedy Meadows Trailhead. The polygon is elongated horizontally, following the boundary of the existing wilderness. The northern portion near Olancho and the southern portion near Kennedy Meadows are narrow due to the buffer between the road and existing wilderness boundary. The majority of the polygon intersects with the South Sierra Inventoried Roadless Area. Ecosystem types include Jeffrey pine, mountain mahogany, pinyon-juniper, sagebrush, white fir and xeric shrublands and blackbrush. The topography is characterized as Eastern Sierra escarpment with steep slopes and forested canyons.

National Vegetation Classification System data indicates 14 percent of the area of the polygon (3,556 acres) consists of an ecological group, Inter-Mountain Basin big sagebrush shrub land, which has less than 10 percent of its national extent protected in the National Wilderness Preservation System. An additional 14,000 acres consists of Great Basin pinyon-juniper woodland and Rocky Mountain aspen forest and woodland, which have less than 15 percent of their national extent protected in the National Wilderness Preservation System.

### Wilderness Characteristics

#### *Degree the Area Generally Appears to be Affected Primarily by the Forces of Nature*

Grazing occurs in the Monache area and there has been some headcuts and stream improvement work completed. Grazing also occurs at lower elevations in the eastern portion of the polygon.

Within the Monache and Blackrock area, there is a 75-yard wooden causeway on motorized trail 35E401. There are range improvements, including pasture fences in the Soda Creek area. Drift fences south of Summers Ridge may be in the area. Two spring boxes south of the Monache guard station may be in the area. Roughly 20 percent of the area has been surveyed for cultural resources, and more than 30 properties have been documented, which include prehistoric artifact scatters and one historic debris scatter.

There are recreation developments in the eastern portion of the polygon. A portion of Olancha Pass Trailhead parking and stock holding corral may be within the boundary. There is a spring box and water system for Kennedy Meadows Campground and existing dirt road access to Wildrose Trailhead. There is dispersed camping and a dirt parking area at the trailhead. There are range improvements within the polygon. There is drift fence at the Olancha Pass Trailhead area, Wildrose Trail, and Pacific Crest Trail north of Kennedy Meadows campground. The Los Angeles Department of Water and Power has infrastructure in Haiwee Canyon. Very little of the area has been surveyed. Fewer than 10 properties are known, including remains of a historic corral, historic ditch, historic refuse scatters and numerous prehistoric artifacts scatters and milling stations.

The Monache and Blackrock portion of the polygon west of the South Sierra Wilderness has moderate ecological integrity. The area moderately reflects conditions that would normally be associated with an area absent of human intervention. There is moderate impact to plant communities. The area is mostly unsurveyed for invasive plant species. There is very little impact from humans within this area on wildlife. The area does provide contiguous wildlife habitat. There are perennial (mostly) channels including Soda Creek and Snake Creek, and springs and meadows are present throughout the area. There are legacy and current grazing impacts (trampling from grazing) along with off highway vehicle impacts. Compaction in meadows and the sod layer appears to be less than desired condition in several meadows. Hummocks are present in wet and spring areas. Vegetation is in good to excellent condition. The air quality is nonattainment for ozone (Tulare County).

The portion of the polygon located east of the South Sierra Wilderness has high ecological integrity. The area reflects conditions that would normally be associated with an area absent of human intervention. There are minimal impacts to plant communities; moderate in drainages at low elevations. There is some cheatgrass. Fires appear to be occurring within natural fire regime. There have been recent fires, but not too large or severe. There is very little impact on wildlife from humans within this area. The area does provide contiguous wildlife habitat. Perennial streams include Hogback Creek, Haiwee Creek and Talus Canyon. Riparian areas contain canyon live oak and are in good condition. There was fire (Clover Fire in 2008) and a flood event (2010)

that impacted Haiwee Canyon. This polygon contains true Mojave Desert ecosystems which are largely intact including Joshua trees, cholla cactus, creosote, plus healthy canyon live oak ecosystems and pinyon-juniper.

*Opportunities for Solitude or Primitive and Unconfined Recreation*

Within the western portion of the polygon (Monache and Blackrock), the topography is gentle to moderate slopes. There is some screening from trees and topography, but a portion of the area is bordered by popular roads and there are motorized trails in the area. The Monache area is a multiple use recreation area, popular for off highway vehicle recreation and dispersed camping, primarily during the summer and fall months. The area is also popular for hunting during the fall months. The occasional to frequent off highway vehicle traffic limits the opportunity for solitude in the area. There is no area free from motorized noise in the southern, eastern and northern portions of the polygon. There may be an area free from motorized noise in the western portion, adjacent to the Golden Trout Wilderness. The potential for encounters with other visitors is low to medium, with most of the use focused around roads, trails and the river corridor. Current primitive recreation activities in this area include: hiking, backpacking and horseback riding on one forest system trail that accesses the Golden Trout Wilderness; fishing on the South Fork Kern River and deer hunting in the fall. The degree of challenge is similar to the adjacent wilderness. There are some opportunities for wildlife observation, photography and enjoying nature on the volcanic Monache Mountain. Access for winter cross-country skiing is challenging because this area is at least 25 miles from a plowed road.

Within the eastern portion of the polygon (South Sierra East), there is screening from vegetation and topography. There is a distant view of Highway 395 that is visible along the eastern boundary, but not highly visible. A small portion is adjacent to developments at Walker Creek, Olancha Pass Trailhead, Sage Flat (private property), Kennedy Meadows Campground and Tunawee (private property). Most of area is several miles from any development and there is little evidence of civilization. There are some areas that have existing uses that would limit the opportunity for solitude, such as: livestock grazing and cattle drives in the Walker Creek area and on the Olancha Pass Trail; dispersed camping and off highway vehicle use on 19S01 (Walker Creek area); dispersed camping and trailhead at Olancha Pass Trailhead; sounds from private residences at Sage Flat; and Kennedy Meadows Campground (paved road and campground noise). The potential for encounters with other visitors is low, based on the low number of current visitors to the South Sierra Wilderness. Current primitive recreation activities in this area include hiking, backpacking and horseback riding on several forest system trails that cross the polygon and access the South Sierra Wilderness and deer hunting in the fall. Most of the recreation use is concentrated near Olancha Pass, Kennedy Meadows (Pacific Crest Trail) and Wildrose Trail. The Pacific Crest Trail north of Kennedy Meadows sees large numbers of through-hikers in May and June. The degree of challenge along trails is similar to the adjacent wilderness, except that the challenge is greater on the Haiwee Trail because of extensive flash flood damage. Travel along or up the steep eastern escarpment of the Sierra Nevada would be challenging because there are no trails and surface water can be scarce. The portion of the area near the South Fork Kern River is a popular primitive recreation area during spring, summer and fall months. There are also opportunities for wildlife observation, photography and enjoying nature. Due to unreliable snowpack, this area is not suitable for cross-country skiing.

### *Other Features of Value*

The western portion of the polygon contains the sensitive plant, Kern milkvetch and the rare plants, mountain yellow violet and field ivesia. Monache Mountain, a unique volcanic feature, is located in this area.

The eastern portion of the polygon contains Mojave Desert and oak woodlands with high ecological integrity. True Mojave Desert and oak woodland ecosystems are largely intact (Joshua trees, cholla cactus, creosote, plus healthy canyon live oak ecosystems and pinyon-juniper). The area provides rare habitat for a butterfly species of concern, and has habitat for spring snails and the Kern slender salamander. Sierra Nevada bighorn sheep are in the northern portion of the polygon. The area includes the rare plants, Kern Canyon clarkia and Charlotte's phacelia. It contains the northern most population of silk tassel bush (uncommon on the east-side).

### **Manageability**

The western portion of the polygon is irregularly shaped due to cherry-stem roads (including Monache Jeep Road), as well as cherry-stem roads in the southern half of the polygon. These cherry-stem roads protrude into the polygon, nearly splitting it half in some places. In addition, there are motorized trails in the area. The Monache area is a popular off highway vehicle recreation area, and includes roads for four wheel drive vehicles, as well as single-track motorcycle trails. There is a private land parcel along the northeastern perimeter (Anchor Ranch). There is a special use permit for a water diversion for one of the cabins that is located on private land.

The eastern portion of the polygon follows the eastern boundary of the South Sierra Wilderness and the straight-line forest boundary along the southern and eastern perimeter. There are very few cherry-stem roads that protrude into the polygon; mostly short spurs along the western perimeter (Haiwee Pass Trailhead, 0.9 mile; 21S101, 0.9 mile; and Tunnawee, 0.5 mile). The northern portion of the polygon is narrow and elongated north to south, and there is a buffer between the road system and existing wilderness boundary. The southwestern perimeter is narrow and elongated west to east, and there is a buffer between Kennedy Meadows road and existing wilderness boundary. The remaining areas of the polygon are up to four miles across, with little to no development or permanent intrusions. The polygon borders both the South Sierra Wilderness and the Sacatar Trail Wilderness (Bureau of Land Management). Grazing occurs in the eastern portion of the polygon, as well as on adjacent Bureau of Land Management lands. Talus Canyon, Dunmovin spring box, but there is no record of water rights. The Los Angeles Department of Water and Power has infrastructure in Haiwee Canyon.

### **Summary of Potential Suitability for Inclusion in the National Wilderness Preservation System**

In, Monache and Blackrock, there is livestock grazing and there have been watershed treatments in the area. There are developments related to grazing improvements in the area. The area is believed to have moderate ecological integrity with some legacy and current grazing and off highway vehicle impacts. Off highway vehicle recreation and dispersed camping is popular in the area, which impacts the opportunity for solitude. There may be opportunity for primitive and unconfined recreation.

In South Sierra East, there is livestock grazing that occurs in the area. There are developments related to grazing improvements, Los Angeles Department of Water and Power infrastructure (Haiwee Canyon area), and recreation developments that may be in the area. The area is believed

to have high ecological integrity with true Mojave Desert and oak woodland ecosystems which are largely intact. There is the opportunity for solitude, limited in a few specific areas. There may be opportunity for primitive and unconfined recreation.

Because of adjacency to existing wilderness, and the many intact and unique vegetation features, the portion of the polygon located east of South Sierra Wilderness has the potential to be reshaped to exclude developments that are substantially noticeable and existing uses that limit the opportunity for solitude.

This polygon presents an opportunity to protect ecological groups that may be minimally represented in the National Wilderness Preservation System. Ecological groups with less than 10 percent of their national extent in the National Wilderness Preservation System comprise 3,556 acres. Ecological groups with less than 15 percent of their national extent in the National Wilderness Preservation System comprise an additional 14,021 acres. The northern and southwestern portion of the polygon is a narrow buffer between existing wilderness and the road system, which affects manageability. The remaining polygon area east of South Sierra Wilderness has the potential to be reshaped, particularly adjacent to existing wilderness. (For map see Exhibit A – Inyo National Forest Evaluation Maps – Evaluation Map I.)

## **Polygon 1394 (Domeland/Woodpecker Roadless Area – Adjacent to Domeland Wilderness)**

### **General Description**

Polygon 1394 is a large, north-south trending unit adjacent to the Dome Land Wilderness and totaling 51,801 acres of land. Located to the northeast of Kernville, this large complex unit rises from the southern shrub-covered slopes to the east of Kernville to the conifer forests and meadows of the Kern Plateau. This unit is bounded and dissected by an extensive system of cherry stemmed, forest system roads and motorized routes breaking the larger unit into 5 subpolygons. Existing mechanized and motorized opportunities are present within this unit.

Elevations range from approximately 2,500 to nearly 10,000 feet on Sirretta Peak. The biotic communities in the lower to mid-elevations are composed of various shrubs, forbs, nonnative grasses and chaparral. Higher elevations are composed primary of conifer forests with abundant meadows and mountain streams. Upper elevations on the north burned partially during the Manter Fire in 2000 and the McNally Fire in 2002. General topography of the area is rolling plateau with ridges divided into two areas. The area is contiguous with the Domeland Wilderness on the east boundary and much of the unit is in one of two Inventory Roadless Areas, the Woodpecker Inventoried Roadless Area in the north and Domeland Inventoried Roadless Area in the south.

Historic motorized use is prevalent to the north and west of this sub-polygon. A series of meadows is above 8,000 feet draining into Dark Canyon and Trout Creek.

Sub-polygon 1394.4 is separated from sub-polygon 1394.3 by the Sirretta Trail, a forest system trail open to motorcycles and bounded by the Dome Land Wilderness on the east. Most of the area is in the Woodpecker IRA and one half of the Twisselmann Botanical Area. The area is mountainous, forested and contains Snow Creek.

Sub-polygon 1394.3 is in the north of the unit, west and southwest of sub-polygon 1394.5 and bounded by the Sirretta Trail in the south east, Cannell Meadow Trail on the west (both open to motorized use) and forest road 22S19 on the west to Sherman Pass Road, and forest road 22S21 is cherry-stemmed. The boundary then proceeds to forest system trail 33E28 (open to motorized

use) to Forest Road 22S26 and then to the Dome Land Wilderness boundary. There are treated stands on the northern boundary. Many streams, springs, including Little Trout Creek and Machine Creek, Sirretta Meadow, Sirretta Peak at 9,977 feet elevation and one half of the Twisselmann Botanical Area is within this sub-polygon. The area is mountainous, high elevation and is predominately conifer forest. Most of the area is in the Woodpecker IRA

Sub-polygon 1394.2 is bounded by the Dome Land Wilderness on the east; forest system trail 34E12 (motorized), forest road 23S07, and forest road 22S12 on the west, Cannell Meadow NR Trail (motorized) on the east. Forest roads 22S12, 24S13, 24S33, and 24S14 are cherry stemmed, and dissect the sub-polygon. The predominant vegetation open conifer woodland with meadows, some shrub land and abundant rock outcrops. The area is heavily influenced by the extensive system of forest service roads that exist in the interior and that are not in an Inventoried Roadless Area.

Sub-polygon 1394.1 is on the south east corner of the unit that contains the Cannell Meadow National Recreation Trail (motorized), is closest to Kernville, and not adjacent to wilderness. It is predominately sloped shrub land which climbs out of the Kern River Canyon to the Kern Plateau.

National Vegetation Classification System data indicates 12 percent of the area of the polygon (6,202 acres) consists of ecological groups that have less than 5 percent of their national extent protected in the National Wilderness Preservation System. The most prevalent are Inter-Mountain Basin big sagebrush shrub land and Inter-Mountain Basin big sagebrush steppe. This polygon also contains 7 ecological groups with a total area of 4,780 acres which have less than 20 percent of their national extent protected in the National Wilderness Preservation System. The most prevalent is Great Basin pinyon-juniper woodland.

### Wilderness Characteristics

#### *Degree the Area Generally Appears to be Affected Primarily by the Forces of Nature*

The area appears natural for the most part and generally appears to reflect ecological conditions that would normally be associated with the area without human intervention. Conifer forests and shrublands appear natural. The mid and upper elevations burned in the 1995 Fay, 2000 Manter and 2002 McNally Fires exhibiting the natural role of fire. Most of the meadows appear to be in good condition. Mid-elevations have been heavily impacted by the historic clear cuts and plantations stemming from the control of dwarf mistletoe. The area is also affected by post fire salvage logging. Improvements from grazing exist to this day with cabins, fencing and other features to manage livestock. Signs of livestock and long-term grazing including head cutting in multiple areas throughout the southerly portion of the polygon

The visible evidence of the extensive forest system roads and the noise from motorized use is most noticeable along cherry stemmed roads specifically in the center of subpolygon 1394.2 and throughout subpolygon 1394.5.

Some creeks in the area appear to have California golden/rainbow hybrids. There is historic presence of mountain yellow-legged frog. The general area has historic ecological collections of multiple species by Grinnell at Taylor Meadow, and occasional detection of fisher, spotted owl and goshawk.

#### *Opportunities for Solitude or Primitive and Unconfined Recreation*

The area and lands immediately adjacent currently receives high visitation with visible signs of development on boundaries and along the cherry-stem roads. The traffic noise from the use of

roads, motorized and nonmotorized trails within the area may create an atmosphere where the feeling of remote solitude is not possible. The southerly portion of the polygon has a very close proximity to Kernville and highways limiting the solitude potential due to proximity of human activity. The network of roads and trails on the boundaries of each subpolygon and in adjacent areas is heavily utilized by off-highway, hikers, and horseback riders to access wilderness trailheads and other dispersed recreation opportunities, private property, and range allotments. A locally important mountain bike trail is on the boundary of subpolygons 1394.3 and 1392.1 unit. The area has several improvements mainly for recreation including undeveloped campsites, corrals, and trailheads along boundary and cherry stemmed roads. Portions of a historic phone line connecting Lone Pine to Kernville and Lake Isabell still are visible in portions of the area. Remnants of the Cannell Lookout phone line survive to the south of Cannell Trail. There is minimal recreation development however range improvements in the form of fences, corrals, and cabins are noticeable throughout the area. Low elevation military overflights occur frequently in this area.

#### *Other Features of Value*

Subpolygon 1394.3 and 1394.4 contain the Twisselmann Botanical Area and the public comments indicate that the area has astonishing botanical diversity. A number of interesting vistas of Domelands are possible within the polygon contribute to the wilderness characteristics of the area. Numerous historic and prehistoric sites are located within the area. The area also includes the Trout Creek critical aquatic refuge.

#### **Manageability**

The area has many entry points from open roads and trails authorized for motorized providing easy access during the summer months. However the fairly remote location limits visitors from outside of Kern County. The cherry stemmed road networks in subpolygon 1394.2 makes management of motorized use difficult in the areas that are outside of an inventoried roadless area. An existing motorized route, the Sirretta Trail, is identified in the mediated settlement agreement 1990. Motorcycle use was identified as an accepted inconsistency in the area classified as semi-primitive nonmotorized until an alternative route was built or a decision not to build an alternative route was made. In either case, the trail would be closed to motorized use. This has not been resolved even though extensive work has been done by planning teams. Subpolygon 1394.5 is very small and surrounded by motorized routes with one cherry stem road reducing the manageability as wilderness. The limited access, light visitor use, and the steep topography facilitates manageability of subpolygon 1394.3 and 1394.4 except for the motorized route (Sirretta Trail) that divides them. The multiple meadows and streams in these areas would benefit from wilderness protections.

#### **Summary of Potential Suitability for Inclusion in the National Wilderness Preservation System**

The wilderness characteristics of this area have been compromised from motorized use of roads and trails in Subpolygon 1394.5 and in the center portion of Subpolygon 1394.2 that is outside of any Inventoried Roadless Area.

The polygon is contiguous to the Domelands Wilderness to the east. The area is bordered by several roads open to off highway vehicle recreation on the west and southwest, and several motorized trails on the north. The area is bounded by several cherry-stem roads on the south and many undeveloped campsites at the end of the cherry-stem roads. The area has been affected by grazing and the Manter Fire in 2000 and the McNally Fire in 2002. Several recreation

developments are located within the area and private property at Horse Meadow. Several historic communication lines exist on portions of the area. The polygon presents a moderate opportunity to protect ecological groups that may be minimally represented in the National Wilderness Preservation System. Ecological groups with less than 5 percent of their national extent in the National Wilderness Preservation System comprise 6,202 acres. Ecological groups with between 10 and 20 percent of their national extent in the National Wilderness Preservation System comprise 4,780 acres. (For map see Exhibit B – Sequoia National Forest Evaluation Maps – Evaluation Map E and Evaluation Map G.)

## **Polygon 1395 (Clicks Creek – Adjacent to Golden Trout Wilderness)**

### **General Description**

This triangular polygon is 2,285 acres and bisected by a cherry-stemmed road providing access to the Summit Trailhead. Approximately 65 percent of the outer boundary is adjacent to the Golden Trout Wilderness and the Moses recommended wilderness. The entire polygon is in the Giant Sequoia National Monument. The area is relatively flat, headwaters covered in high elevation conifer forest. Elevation is approximately 8,100 feet.

National Vegetation Classification System data indicates only 1 acre consists of ecological groups that have less than 5 percent of their national extent protected in the National Wilderness Preservation System. This polygon also contains 3 ecological groups with a total area of 92 acres which have less than 20 percent of their national extent protected in the National Wilderness Preservation System.

### **Wilderness Characteristics**

#### *Degree the Area Generally Appears to be Affected Primarily by the Forces of Nature*

Approximately 50 percent of area appears noticeably altered by timber harvest and road building to support this historic use. A cherry-stemmed, system road provides access to the Summit Trailhead splitting the polygon in two. Species composition has been altered significantly by human actions associated with fire suppression and historic timber harvesting. There is light hunting pressure, some invasive plants and past fish stocking of nonnatives in streams. Amphibians are not doing well. Connectivity for species dependent on old growth is good.

Although the polygon is not located near developed areas, human manipulations are apparent. Approximately 50 percent of the area was harvested and improvements such as plantations, vegetation management projects, check dams, stream restoration structures and remnant roads for timber harvest are still noticeable and disturb the naturalness of the area.

#### *Opportunities for Solitude or Primitive and Unconfined Recreation*

This polygon is next to open roads and past management activities intrude on the sense of solitude and limiting opportunities for primitive and unconfined recreation.

#### *Other Features of Value*

Perennial streams originate in this polygon and feed the Little Kern River and are habitat for Little Kern golden trout.

## Manageability

The Giant Sequoia Management Plan governs management of the entire area and requires protection of objects of interest which may require mechanical treatments. The current condition of the resource does not have ecological integrity and would benefit from restoration activities. Many logged areas that may need future restoration making management as wilderness difficult. The area is also popular for OSV in the winter and wilderness management would displace this use.

## Summary of Potential Suitability for Inclusion in the National Wilderness Preservation System

Monument plan requires protection of objects of interest which may necessitate active management. The area is in need of restoration. Existing access roads and ecological integrity disrupts the unimpaired condition of this area, however these could eventually return to a more natural condition if roads were removed from the interior. Much of the area triangle projects into wilderness and the shape makes it a logical addition if roads were removed and the trailhead was relocated. This polygon does not present an opportunity to protect ecological groups that may be minimally represented in the National Wilderness Preservation System. Ecological groups with less than 5 percent of their national extent in the National Wilderness Preservation System comprise a low number of acres. Ecological groups with between 10 and 20 percent of their national extent in the National Wilderness Preservation System comprise 92 acres. (For map see Exhibit B – Sequoia National Forest Evaluation Maps – Evaluation Map C.)

## **Polygon 1397 (South of Jordan Peak – Adjacent to Moses Recommended Wilderness)**

### General Description

This elongated, oval polygon is 2,285 acres with an irregular boundary made by several cherry-stemmed roads. Adjacent to the proposed Moses Wilderness at the northern tip however, it shares a larger boundary with two residential communities, Sequoia Crest and Alpine Village. The entire polygon is in the Giant Sequoia National Monument. The area is relatively flat, headwaters covered in high elevation conifer forest. Elevation is approximately 8,100 feet.

National Vegetation Classification System data, based on the polygon size of 3,104 acres, indicates 1acre consists of ecological groups that have less than 5 percent of their national extent protected in the National Wilderness Preservation System. This polygon also contains 4 ecological groups with a total area of 447 acres which have less than 20 percent of their national extent protected in the National Wilderness Preservation System.

### Wilderness Characteristics

#### *Degree the Area Generally Appears to be Affected Primarily by the Forces of Nature*

Approximately 50 percent of area appears noticeably altered by timber harvest and road building to support this historic use. One road provides access to a microwave tower, and Jordan Peak Lookout is still in operation and highly visible. Species composition has been altered significantly by human actions associated with fire suppression and historic timber harvesting. Connectivity for species dependent on old growth is good.

The area generally reflects natural conditions but there is evidence of modern civilization. Roads are prevalent on the boundary and cherry-stemmed into the boundary. There is a microwave tower and access road and a log cabin. Jordan Peak Lookout still in operation as a fire lookout, and is an

outstanding vertical landmark. Two private communities and Highway 190 form the boundary on the west.

Although the polygon is not located near developed areas, human manipulations are apparent. Fire suppression and past harvest as well as grazing have significantly altered the ecosystem. Streams are somewhat degraded, air quality is often poor due to human uses in the Central Valley, and species composition is altered.

#### *Opportunities for Solitude or Primitive and Unconfined Recreation*

The proximity to open roads and past management activities intrude on any sense of solitude a visitor might experience and reduces any opportunities for primitive and unconfined recreation. Activities from the adjacent residential communities impact opportunities for solitude.

#### *Other Features of Value*

Jordan Peak Lookout, expected cultural and historic sites, and headwaters of important perennial streams.

#### **Manageability**

Most of the elongated boundary is bounded by residential development or roads. Special use permits include grazing, power line easement, potential active tribal uses, 1 special use permit for roads, 4 special use permits for water transmission lines less than 12 inches, 1 special use permit for a passive reflector-broadcasting, and 1 special use permit for amateur radio. Jordan Peak Lookout is still active. Special uses, adjacent residential development and the need for wild fire protection would make wilderness management challenging.

#### **Summary of Potential Suitability for Inclusion in the National Wilderness Preservation System**

The wilderness characteristics are impaired by past management activities, roads and close proximity to residential communities. Although the polygon is adjacent to proposed wilderness, the manageability and character is heavily impacted by residential developments and special uses. The small size and shape does not allow for any adjustment by reshaping boundaries. This area would be a good candidate for restoration activities. (For map see Exhibit B – Sequoia National Forest Evaluation Maps – Evaluation Map C.)

### **Polygon 1404 (Hatchet Peak)**

#### **General Description**

The area consists of 6,068 acres and is bordered by the Tule River Indian Reservation to the north, Bureau of Land Management lands and private lands to the west, and National Forest System land to the east. The area is basically wedge-shaped and primarily a moderate to steep west-facing slope, with a high point at Hatchet Peak at an elevation of 6,385 feet. The entire area lies within the Giant Sequoia National Monument.

National Vegetation Classification System data indicates none of the area of the polygon consists of ecological groups that have less than 5 percent of their national extent protected in the National Wilderness Preservation System. This polygon also contains 6 ecological groups with a total area of 2,279 acres which have less than 20 percent of their national extent protected in the National Wilderness Preservation System. The most prevalent is Mediterranean California mixed oak woodland.

## Wilderness Characteristics

### *Degree the Area Generally Appears to be Affected Primarily by the Forces of Nature*

Fire suppression has most affected the vegetation. Some past timber harvest, although not very noticeable, has occurred in higher elevations, and parts of 2 grazing allotments exist in the area. The area has been a frequent site of illegal marijuana cultivation. Invasive plant species are present. Air quality is poor. Some past timber harvest with road construction, although not very noticeable, has occurred in higher elevations. Timber harvest and ranching/grazing occur on the adjacent Tule River Indian Reservation, Bureau of Land Management lands and private ranch lands. Because of the close proximity to other landownerships (the Tule River Indian Reservation, Bureau of Land Management lands and private ranch lands), visual evidence of development outside the area is present within the area. All these contribute to diminish the apparent naturalness.

### *Opportunities for Solitude or Primitive and Unconfined Recreation*

Use is generally low and currently limited to areas near open roads adjacent to the area. However, because private ranch lands, Bureau Of Land Management lands and the Indian reservation border the area, ongoing activity in those areas could affect the sense of solitude or primitive and unconfined recreation. Because of the close proximity to those areas, evidence of civilization exists, with visual evidence of development apparent. Fencing is the most prevalent intrusion, which could affect the unconfined aspect. The area is generally free from motorized noise.

### *Other Features of Value*

The area is entirely within the Giant Sequoia National Monument. One historic and five prehistoric sites have been formally recorded. Many more sites, both prehistoric and historic and historic, are expected to be found.

## Manageability

The western and northern boundaries of the area are the forest boundaries. The eastern edge is largely bounded by roads. Because of the close proximity to other landownerships (the Tule River Indian Reservation, Bureau of Land Management lands and private ranch lands), fire suppression activities and protection of special uses and private property protection will make management as wilderness difficult. Timber harvest, ranching and grazing occur on adjacent lands. Because the area is entirely within the Giant Sequoia National Monument, it is subject to the presidential proclamation that created it. The Giant Sequoia National Monument Management Plan governs the area's management. Fuel reduction to protect the objects of interest and tribal lands, as prescribed in the monument management plan, could affect wilderness management.

## Summary of Potential Suitability for Inclusion in the National Wilderness Preservation System

Fire suppression, illegal marijuana cultivation, grazing and poor air quality diminish the apparent naturalness. Although the area is largely undeveloped, the close proximity to adjacent lands, with visual evidence of civilization apparent, diminishes opportunities for solitude and primitive and unconfined recreation. Because the area is entirely within the Giant Sequoia National Monument, it is subject to the presidential proclamation that created it. The Giant Sequoia National Monument Management Plan governs the area's management. Fuel reduction to protect the objects of interest and tribal lands, as prescribed in the Giant Sequoia National Monument Management Plan, could affect wilderness management. This polygon presents a limited opportunity to protect ecological groups that may be minimally represented in the National

Wilderness Preservation System. Ecological groups with less than 5 percent of their national extent in the National Wilderness Preservation System comprise none of the acres. Ecological groups with between 10 and 20 percent of their national extent in the National Wilderness Preservation System comprise 2,279 acres. (For map see Exhibit B – Sequoia National Forest Evaluation Maps – Evaluation Map E.)

## **Polygon 1408 (Upper Kern Canyon Escarpment–Baker Peak)**

### **General Description**

Polygon 1408 consists of 48,730 acres and is primarily a steep, east-facing slope on the Upper Kern Canyon Escarpment, with the highest point at Baker Peak at an elevation of 7,926 feet. The vegetation is predominately shrub land with limited hardwood woodland and conifer hardwood woodland. Existing mechanized and motorized opportunities are present along the western boundary, many of which extend into this unit. The shape of the polygon is long and narrow and at least a few miles wide at its narrowest point. The polygon is not adjacent to any existing wilderness.

The polygon was broken into two subpolygons 1408.1 and 1408.2 in the initial evaluation. Subpolygon 1408.1 is in the lower southwest and contains roads that extend into the subpolygon, dead-end, and are identified in the Travel Analysis Process as likely not needed. Some of these roads are operation Level 2 roads open to vehicle use on the motor vehicle use map. The Bull Run Trail, 32E39 (motorized) is within this subpolygon as well as mines. The lands adjacent to this area to the west are moderately roaded as a result of past timber harvesting activities.

Subpolygon 1408.2 is much larger. This section is mostly in the Chico Inventoried Roadless Area and a small portion of encroaches in the west into the Giant Sequoia National Monument, The eastern edge overlaps the North Fork Kern River wild and scenic river corridor. Classified as a Recreation Zone, this river corridor is readily accessible by road (Mountain 99), and has development along the shoreline, and has undergone some impoundment or diversion in the past. The section of the river on the eastern boundary of this polygon experiences extremely high visitor use and there is extensive recreation development just outside the eastern boundary along the North Fork Kern River. Baker Point Botanical Area is located within this subpolygon. The communities of Kernville, Riverkern, and Wofford Heights are on the southern and southeastern boundaries. Private land adjacent to the area includes residences and businesses. The communities of Riverkern, Kernville and Wofford Heights are adjacent to the area. Mountain 99, which is a heavily traveled road, is adjacent to and on the opposite side of the North Fork Kern River.

National Vegetation Classification System data indicates 3 percent of the area of the polygon (1,505 acres) consists of ecological groups that have less than 5 percent of their national extent protected in the National Wilderness Preservation System. The most prevalent is Inter-Mountain Basin big sagebrush steppe. This polygon also contains 7 ecological groups with a total area of 15,662 acres which have less than 20 percent of their national extent protected in the National Wilderness Preservation System. The most prevalent are California lower montane blue oak-foothill pine woodland, Great Basin pinyon-juniper woodland, Mediterranean California mesic mixed conifer forest and woodland, and Mediterranean California mixed oak woodland.

## Wilderness Characteristics

### *Degree the Area Generally Appears to be Affected Primarily by the Forces of Nature*

The area somewhat reflects natural conditions, with natural processes, such as fire and plant succession except for a plantation on the western periphery and a few meadows on the western periphery with large gullies. Utility lines, communications sites, and other linear right-of-way structures within the area and the easements, or other rights-of-way that accompany these special use permits, disrupt the natural quality that “should be free from the effects of an increasing population, accompanied by expanding settlement and growing mechanization” and the undeveloped quality which is degraded by administrative sites. Numerous developments and activities occur adjacent to the polygon, particularly along the eastern edge, to the south and somewhat on the western boundary. The sights and sounds would be apparent detracting from the natural quality. Air quality is moderate, influenced by the San Joaquin air basin. Good vistas of the Upper Kern River and Kern Plateau exist. Invasive vegetation species are present. The area has adequate chaparral cover to provide contiguous habitat and connectivity for wildlife. Rare plants exist, such as the Shirley Meadows star tulip and Piute cypress.

The steep character and vegetation type generally limits access to most of subpolygon 1408.2 and there are no motorized routes identified on the motor vehicle use map. A communication site is located at Baker Point, as is the Baker Point Lookout.

Motorized and nonmotorized access is provided in subpolygon 1408.1 by means of one motorcycle trail and multiple spur-like roads. The undeveloped quality is also disrupted by some mining activity, both historic and current. Off highway vehicle use is concentrated in the southwest part of the area, and the intent is to retain this use in that area.

### *Opportunities for Solitude or Primitive and Unconfined Recreation*

The area is generally steep, with limited access. The potential for encounters with other visitors is high if hiking on trails such as the Whiskey Flat Trail, a popular nonmotorized trail beginning at the north end of the town of Kernville and travelling north along the Upper Kern River. Military training overflights occur frequently in this area. Off highway vehicle use is concentrated subpolygon 1408.1 in the southwest part of the polygon and noise could interfere with the undeveloped quality and opportunities for primitive recreation in this area. Noise from the roads on all of the boundaries could also interfere. Additionally, snowmobile use occurs on groomed snowmobile routes in subpolygon 1408.1. Other trails do not receive much winter use. A traveler is likely to see or hear evidence of civilization from within the area.

Within the eastern third of the area on east-facing slopes, sights and sounds from adjacent development and activities would be apparent. Numerous developed and undeveloped recreation facilities, which are very heavily used, are adjacent to the eastern boundary of the area, along the Kern River. Private land adjacent to the area includes residences and businesses in the communities of Riverkern, Kernville, and Wofford Heights. Mountain 99 is heavily traveled and adjacent to the Kern River on the opposite side. The Upper Kern River also receives thousands of commercial and private whitewater boating visitors each year, as a world-wide whitewater recreation and fishing destination. These all would interfere with opportunities for solitude.

### *Other Features of Value*

Rare plants occur, such as the Shirley Meadows star tulip and Piute cypress, and the Baker Point Botanical Area is located here. Deep Creek Cave is on the western edge. The area features good vistas of the Upper Kern River and Kern Plateau. Numerous historic and prehistoric sites exist.

The North Fork Kern Wild and Scenic River lies along the eastern boundary of the area, and the area overlaps the wild and scenic river corridor.

### Manageability

Generally, this area is a large tract of relatively undeveloped land, with mostly low potential for further development due to lack of access, topography and brush. Eighty percent of the area has very limited access. The shape is long and narrow, but due to its size, it is still a few miles wide at its narrowest point. Utility lines and other linear right-of-way structures exist within the polygon. A communication site is located at Baker Point, where the potential exists to add more improvements. Four active lode mining claims are in the area. Motorized and mechanized use on existing Forest Service system trails would have to be eliminated. These users would be displaced; and some incursion could occur, as people are reluctant to change their current use patterns. Off highway vehicle use is concentrated in the southwest part of the area, with the intent to retain those trails in that area. The eastern edge overlaps the North Fork of the Kern wild and scenic river corridor. This section of river is managed as a recreation zone and receives very high levels of use, both on the land adjacent to the river as well as on the river itself.

Numerous developments and activities occur adjacent to the area, some immediately adjacent, particularly along the eastern edge and to the south. Mountain 99, which is heavily traveled, is adjacent to the opposite side of the Kern River. Numerous developed and undeveloped day use and overnight recreation facilities, which are very heavily used, are adjacent to the eastern boundary of the area, along the Kern River. Private land adjacent to the area includes residences and businesses. The communities of Riverkern, Kernville and Wofford Heights are adjacent to the area. Additional development is likely in Kernville and Wofford Heights, which could result in new demands on this area for utility and recreation infrastructure and to conduct fuels reduction.

### Summary of Potential Suitability for Inclusion in the National Wilderness Preservation System

Although the area is largely undeveloped, the existing multiple uses needed to support adjacent communities, and the location away from other wilderness make this area a poor candidate for inclusion. The existence of utility corridors, communication sites, and other special use structures disrupt the natural quality. Wilderness designation or recommendation would potentially displace many existing motorized and mechanized users and limit the ability of the agency to provide proactive restoration projects that would help protect adjacent communities. Development, activities occurring adjacent to the area would diminish any solitude or primitive and unconfined recreation opportunities in approximately one third of the polygon, especially in locations where motorized and mechanized opportunities are provided and to the east and south where recreation and community development would be apparent.

This polygon presents an opportunity to protect ecological groups that may be minimally represented in the National Wilderness Preservation System. Ecological groups with less than 5 percent of their national extent in the National Wilderness Preservation System comprise 1,505 acres. Ecological groups with between 10 and 20 percent of their national extent in the National Wilderness Preservation System comprise an additional 15,662 acres. (For map see Exhibit B – Sequoia National Forest Evaluation Maps – Evaluation Map E.)

## **Polygon 1410 (Deerwood Meadow)**

### **General Description**

Polygon 1410 comprises 8,494 acres of land shaped somewhat like an ear. Elevations range from approximately 6,000 to 9,600 feet. Lower and mid elevations were severely burned during the McNally Fire in 2002, leaving montane shrub with scattered burned trees and isolated islands of forest. Higher elevations have some areas of intact forest. General topography of the area is steep and rocky with bedrock-defined channels due to lack of vegetation and unstable soils. It is adjacent to the Rincon Inventoried Roadless Area on the north, Cannell Inventoried Roadless Area on the south and Woodpecker Inventoried Roadless Area on the east. The area is bordered by the Cherry Hill Road on the west, Sherman Pass Road on the north and a single track motorcycle trail on the east. Several roads exist within the polygon that is currently open to motorized use.

National Vegetation Classification System data indicates 2 percent of the area of the polygon (181 acres) consists of ecological groups that have less than 5 percent of their national extent protected in the National Wilderness Preservation System. This polygon also contains 5 ecological groups with a total area of 1,054 acres which have less than 20 percent of their national extent protected in the National Wilderness Preservation System. Each of these ecological groups, however, comprises less than 1,000 acres in this polygon.

### **Wilderness Characteristics**

#### *Degree the Area Generally Appears to be Affected Primarily by the Forces of Nature*

The area is very lightly visited, mainly hunters in the fall and persons accessing dispersed and developed campgrounds, such as the Horse Meadow Campground. The area is visited by cattle permittees in the course of managing their livestock and livestock infrastructure.

The only development within the area is livestock infrastructure, a few system roads, trails and minor check dams at Poison Meadow and Mosquito Meadow. There are some undeveloped campsites at the end of the cherry-stem roads within the area.

The area has been affected by the severe McNally Fire, cattle grazing, fire suppression, areas of invasive plants and unclosed roads post McNally Fire. The overall character of the area appears burned with scattered dead trees standing and noticeable open nonsystem roads across most of the area. There are some fisher, goshawk and spotted owl detections, limited post McNally Fire. There are some slender salamanders and several sensitive plants within the area. Most alders and riparian vegetation along Brush Creek and Alder Creek were lost during the McNally Fire, but that is recovering.

#### *Opportunities for Solitude or Primitive and Unconfined Recreation*

The area has little visitation within, but high signs of development and use on its boundaries. It is surrounded by motorized trails on the east and by several roads on the boundaries including the main paved arterial road (Sherman Pass Road) on the north and Cherry Hill Road on the west to access private property. The traffic noise from the use of roads and motorized and nonmotorized trails within the area may create an atmosphere where the feeling of remote solitude is not possible.

### *Other Features of Value*

There are no unique or high value special resources that contribute to the wilderness character of the area. The area is within the watershed of existing and potential wild and scenic rivers. Brush Creek has been proposed for consideration by the public.

### **Manageability**

Limited access and due to steep terrain would make manageability difficult.

### **Summary of Potential Suitability for Inclusion in the National Wilderness Preservation System**

The wilderness characteristics of this area have been compromised. The area has been affected by the severe McNally Fire, cattle grazing; fire suppression activities and areas of invasive plants and unclosed roads post McNally Fire. It is primarily used for hunting, grazing, and light recreational use. The area was severely burned during the McNally Fire, leaving standing dead trees and uncharacteristic vegetation conditions. The area has limited attractiveness to visitors and limited access to water for human use. The area is bound by a major paved arterial road on the north (Sherman Pass Road) and another paved road (Cherry Hill Road) on the west that provides access to private property (Horse Meadow). There are some cherry-stem roads on the boundaries of the area. This polygon presents a limited opportunity to protect ecological groups that may be minimally represented in the National Wilderness Preservation System. Ecological groups with less than 5 percent of their national extent in the National Wilderness Preservation System comprise a low number of acres. Ecological groups with between 10 and 20 percent of their national extent in the National Wilderness Preservation System comprise 1,054 acres. (For map see Exhibit B – Sequoia National Forest Evaluation Maps – Evaluation Map D and Evaluation Map E.)

### **Polygon 1420 (Lumreau Creek)**

#### **General Description**

Polygon 1420 comprises of 6,983 acres of land shaped like a tadpole. Elevations range from approximately 4,500 to 6,500 feet. The mountainous area consists of primarily oak woodland, chaparral, nonnative annual grasses and conifer plantations at the highest elevation. The area burned 25 percent on the north from the Red Mountain Fire in 1970, and recently burned during the Ranch Fire in 2014 on the south. General topography of the area is steep with deep canyons. It is not contiguous with other roadless or wilderness areas. It is adjacent to the Greenhorn Creek Inventoried Roadless Area to the southwest.

National Vegetation Classification System data indicates less than 1 percent of the polygon (9 acres) consists of ecological groups that have less than 5 percent of their national extent protected in the National Wilderness Preservation System. This polygon also contains 7 ecological groups with a total area of 2,565 acres which have less than 20 percent of their national extent protected in the National Wilderness Preservation System. The most prevalent are Mediterranean California mixed oak woodland and Mediterranean California mesic mixed conifer forest and woodland.

## Wilderness Characteristics

### *Degree the Area Generally Appears to be Affected Primarily by the Forces of Nature*

The area is highly visited by recreationists on the boundaries where open roads allowed off highway vehicle use. The area within is mainly use for hunting during the fall. The area is highly visited by cattle permittees in the course of managing their livestock and livestock infrastructure.

The only developments within the area are livestock infrastructure, a few unmaintained nonsystem roads and trails, allotment fencing and some structures at the Old Likely Mill site.

The area has been affected by cattle grazing, fire suppression and nonnative feral pigs. The area was recently burned during the Ranch Fire in 2014, leaving extensive noticeable dozer lines within the area. The boundaries of the area have extensive noticeable cherry-stem roads with undeveloped campsites at the end of the roads. Within the area, there are historic condor roost sites present. There are numerous documented prehistoric sites.

### *Opportunities for Solitude or Primitive and Unconfined Recreation*

The area has some visitation within, but multiple signs of development on its boundaries. The area is bordered by several roads open to off highway vehicle recreation on the north, east and south and several motorized trails on the southeast. The traffic noise from the use of roads and motorized trails within the area has a significant impact on the ability to experience a feeling of remoteness and solitude.

### *Other Features of Value*

There is the Old Likely Mill site within the area with unique or high value that contributes to the wilderness characteristics of the area.

## Manageability

Limited access and due to steep and deep canyons would make manageability difficult. Two large cherry-stemmed roads project into the southern portion of the unit, giving it an odd serpentine shape.

## Summary of Potential Suitability for Inclusion in the National Wilderness Preservation System

The wilderness characteristics of this area have been compromised by cattle grazing, fire suppression and nonnative feral pigs. The area is used primarily for hunting and grazing, with very light recreational use. The area is bordered by several roads open to off highway vehicle recreation on the north, east and south and several motorized trails on the southeast which affects solitude in the portions of the unit proximate to the motorized activity. The area has limited attractiveness to visitors and limited access to water for human use. The area has multiple cherry-stem roads on the surrounding boundaries of the polygon which result in an oddly shaped boundary that would be difficult to manage in the southern portion. This polygon presents a limited opportunity to protect ecological groups that may be minimally represented in the National Wilderness Preservation System. Ecological groups with less than 5 percent of their national extent in the National Wilderness Preservation System comprise a low number of acres. Ecological groups with between 10 and 20 percent of their national extent in the National Wilderness Preservation System comprise 2,565 acres. (For map see Exhibit B – Sequoia National Forest Evaluation Maps – Evaluation Map E and Evaluation Map F.)

## **Polygon 1422 (Woodward Peak)**

### **General Description**

Polygon 1422 is a low to mid-elevation mountainous area, primarily of shrubs and oak woodland with some conifers at the highest elevations. The area provides many vista points overlooking the developed areas around Lake Isabella and the communities surrounding the lake. Bounded on the west by Rancheria Road (FS25S15), FS26S03 which connects to Sawmill Road (County Road 128) on the north, private and BLM land on the east, and FS 26S06 on the south. The unit is to the west of Lake Isabella and north of the Lower Kern River and the area is popular for OHV activities.

National Vegetation Classification System data indicates 8 percent of the area of the polygon (411 acres) consists of ecological groups that have less than 5 percent of their national extent protected in the National Wilderness Preservation System. This polygon also contains 7 ecological groups with a total area of 2.139 acres which have less than 20 percent of their national extent protected in the National Wilderness Preservation System. Each of these ecological groups, however, comprises less than 1,000 acres in this polygon.

### **Wilderness Characteristics**

#### *Degree the Area Generally Appears to be Affected Primarily by the Forces of Nature*

Plant composition has been moderately impacted by human activities. Although fire occurrence seems to be within the natural range of variability, large, intense and stand-replacing fires have allowed for the introduction of annual grasses in all parts of the analysis area. Invasive plant species have been introduced to the area primarily along existing roads, and trails used by off-highway vehicle enthusiasts. This area has also been used for illegal marijuana gardens.

There are 4 active placer mining claims throughout T.26, R.31, in Section 36. There are 15 active placer mining claims throughout T.27, R.32, in Section 4. Development is largely limited to mining shafts, both vertical and horizontal. The analysis area overlaps the Greenhorn Mining District and possibly the western edge of the Keys Mining District. Both districts are associated with the discovery of gold in the southern Sierra in 1854 and with the early settlements of Petersburg near the crest of the Greenhorn Mountains and Keyesville near the Kern River. Named mines located within the area include the Lone Star, Deep Gold and the Mayflower. The southern edge of the area is located within the northern fringe of a historic mining landscape associated with Greenhorn Creek and numerous mining features, and associated infrastructure such as ditches, cabins and mill sites are possible. Portions of the area have substantially noticeable alterations to the landscape and permanent improvements, most no longer used or maintained, associated with historic mining.

The presence of roads, motorized trails and the developed campground at Evans Flat, would substantially impact opportunities for solitude and primitive and unconfined recreation.

Although the area has been used for minor amounts of grazing and timber harvest, the effects have been minimal on animal populations and species composition. However natural ecological function has been influenced by the development of trails used for motorized use.

#### *Opportunities for Solitude or Primitive and Unconfined Recreation*

Opportunity for solitude and unconfined recreation are limited by the presence of developed campgrounds, roads and motorized trails within the analysis area. These trails and roads are easily accessed from the communities surrounding Lake Isabella.

### *Other Features of Value*

Numerous prehistoric and historic sites are located in the area. As noted earlier, the area overlaps the Greenhorn Mining District. Landscape-level placer mining sites from the 19th century overlap the area along Greenhorn Creek. Brown's Mill, site of an 1870s sawmill associated with the Cove Mining District and the growth of early Kernville, is located on the eastern side of the area. Traces of historic logging roads and other infrastructure are present in many portions of area.

### **Manageability**

The biggest manageability concern is the presence of numerous roads and motorized use. The sights and sounds from human activity adjacent to the analysis area affect the wilderness character in terms of solitude and primitive and unconfined recreation.

### **Summary of Potential Suitability for Inclusion in the National Wilderness Preservation System**

The wilderness characteristics of this area have been significantly compromised by the prevalence of roads and motorized trails throughout this area, as well as by significant mining history and associated features remaining from the mining era.

This polygon presents a limited opportunity to protect ecological groups that may be minimally represented in the National Wilderness Preservation System. Ecological groups with less than 5 percent of their national extent in the National Wilderness Preservation System comprise a low number of acres. Ecological groups with between 10 and 20 percent of their national extent in the National Wilderness Preservation System comprise 2,139 acres. (For map see Exhibit B – Sequoia National Forest Evaluation Maps – Evaluation Map F.)

## **Polygon 1425 (Delonegha Creek)**

### **General Description**

Polygon 1425 is a mid-elevation mountainous area primarily of oak woodland with brush located along the southern edge adjacent to the Kern River and State Highway 178, which provides access into Lake Isabella, Kernville and other areas within the Sequoia National Forest. The unit is 14,675 acres of land running along the western portion of the Lower Kern River. It is outside the Giant Sequoia National Monument.

National Vegetation Classification System data indicates 1 percent of the area of the polygon (213 acres) consists of ecological groups that have less than 5 percent of their national extent protected in the National Wilderness Preservation System. This polygon also contains 8 ecological groups with a total area of 4,413 acres which have less than 20 percent of their national extent protected in the National Wilderness Preservation System. The most prevalent are California lower montane blue oak-foothill pine woodland and Mediterranean California mixed oak woodland.

### **Wilderness Characteristics**

#### *Degree the Area Generally Appears to be Affected Primarily by the Forces of Nature*

Plant composition has been moderately impacted by man's presence and activities. Although fire occurrence seems to be within the natural range of variability, large, intense and stand-replacing fires have allowed for the introduction of annual grasses in all parts of the analysis area. Invasive plant species have been introduced to the area primarily along existing roads and motorized trails located throughout the area for recreation as well as for activities associated with the operation

and maintenance of a hydroelectric project. This analysis area has also been used as areas for illegal marijuana gardens.

There are 9 active lode mining claims and 22 active placer mining claims throughout T.27, R.32, Sections 3, 10, 11 and 19. There are 3 active lode mining claims and 55 active placer mining claims throughout T.27, R.31, Sections 1, 11, 12, 13, 16, 24, 26, 33 and 34. There are 3 active lode mining claims and 55 active placer mining claims throughout T.27, R.31, Sections 1, 11, 12, 13, 16, 24, 26, 33 and 34. Development is largely limited to mining shafts, both vertical and horizontal. Area overlaps the Greenhorn and Keys Mining Districts. Both districts are associated with the discovery of gold in the southern Sierra in 1854 and with the early settlements of Petersburg near the crest of the Greenhorn Mountains, and Keysville. Numerous mining sites as well as associated infrastructure such as ditches, mill sites, cabins, foundations and dumps have been identified in the area and there is a strong likelihood of many unidentified mining features.

High use recreation developed recreation facilities exist all along the Kern River Corridor, immediately adjacent to the western boundary of the area. Although the area has been used for grazing and timber harvest its effects have been minimal on animal populations and species composition. However natural ecological function has been influenced by the development of roads used for motorized use.

Thirty-percent of the area has been affected by past timber sales while the entire unit has been impacted by 100 years of active fire suppression. The overall character of the area appears natural despite these past impacts. The area contains a number of rare and important plants and animals such as goshawk, Pacific fisher, spotted owl, Hall's daisy, Giant Sequoia groves, several species of slender salamander and possibly Condon's lewisia. The area is important for habitat connectivity for the Pacific fisher. Some nonnative fish may exist.

#### *Opportunities for Solitude or Primitive and Unconfined Recreation*

Opportunities for solitude and unconfined recreation are limited by the presence of motorized use on roads and trails within the analysis area. It is also influenced by the sights and sounds of noticeable activity both by recreational visitors and by activities taking place at the hydroelectric project developed sites that are adjacent to the analysis area along the Kern River. The existence and use of these facilities would substantially impact opportunities for solitude within the portions of the area that are near these adjacent facilities.

#### *Other Features of Value*

Numerous prehistoric and historic sites are located in the area. As noted earlier, the area overlaps the Greenhorn Mining District. Landscape-level placer mining sites from the 19th century overlap the area along Greenhorn Creek. Brown's Mill, site of an 1870s sawmill associated with the Cove Mining District and the growth of early Kernville, is located on the eastern side of the area. Traces of historic logging roads and other infrastructure are present in many portions of area.

#### **Manageability**

The biggest manageability concern is the presence of numerous roads and motorized use. The sights and sounds from human activity adjacent to the analysis area affect the wilderness character in terms of solitude and primitive and unconfined recreation.

## Summary of Potential Suitability for Inclusion in the National Wilderness Preservation System

The wilderness characteristics of this area have been significantly compromised by the prevalence of motorized roads and trails, and their associated uses, as well as by significant mining history. This polygon presents a limited opportunity to protect ecological groups that may be minimally represented in the National Wilderness Preservation System. Ecological groups with less than 5 percent of their national extent in the National Wilderness Preservation System comprise a low number of acres. Ecological groups with between 10 and 20 percent of their national extent in the National Wilderness Preservation System comprise 4,413 acres. (For map see Exhibit B – Sequoia National Forest Evaluation Maps – Evaluation Map F.)

### **Polygon 1426 (Adjacent to Bright Star Wilderness)**

#### General Description

Polygon 1426 is a mid-elevation mountainous area primarily of conifer forest at higher elevations and oak woodland, with brush located at lower elevations. The analysis area is contiguous to the Bright Star Wilderness (Bureau of Land Management). The unit consists of 49,918 acres of land located in the Piute Mountains on the far southern edge of the Sequoia National Forest. Four different bioregions come together in this region, including the Sierra Nevada, Transverse Range, Mojave Desert and the Central Valley. The area offers unique opportunities to study rapid evolution and ecosystem development. Rare Piute and Bodfish cypress trees grow in the area. This area has appeal for dirt bike enthusiasts, and off-highway vehicle recreation. The area was heavily occupied during the Gold Rush, and cabins and mines abound in the area.

National Vegetation Classification System data indicates 7 percent of the area of the polygon (3,407 acres) consists of ecological groups that have less than 5 percent of their national extent protected in the National Wilderness Preservation System. The most prevalent are Inter-Mountain Basin big sagebrush shrub land and Inter-Mountain Basin big sagebrush steppe. This polygon also contains 7 ecological groups with a total area of 12,881 acres which have less than 20 percent of their national extent protected in the National Wilderness Preservation System. The most prevalent are California lower montane blue oak-foothill pine woodland, Great Basin pinyon-juniper woodland, and Mediterranean California mesic mixed conifer forest and woodland.

#### Wilderness Characteristics

##### *Degree the Area Generally Appears to be Affected Primarily by the Forces of Nature*

Motorized roads and trails occur within this area, as well as nonnative grasses introduced by grazing and recreation activities and evidence of timber harvest activities. Evidence of these past and present uses occurs, though the general area continues to appear natural.

Although nonnative grasses are present, due to mostly human activities such as grazing and user-created off highway vehicle trails, their population is not increasing but remains stable. Human impacts have not had an effect on plant composition, fish, wildlife, amphibians or invertebrates.

Although the area has been used for minor amounts of grazing and timber harvest, the effects have been minimal on animal populations and species composition. However, natural ecological function has been influenced by the development of roads used for motorize use.

Thirty-percent of the area has been affected by past timber sales while the entire unit has been impacted by 100 years of active fire suppression. The overall character of the area appears natural despite these past impacts. The area contains a number of rare and important plants and animals such as goshawk, spotted owl, Hall's daisy, several species of slender salamander and possibly Condon's lewisia. The area is important for habitat connectivity for the Pacific fisher. Some nonnative fish may exist.

#### *Opportunities for Solitude or Primitive and Unconfined Recreation*

The opportunities for solitude and unconfined recreation are limited by the presence of motorized use. There are multiple authorized motorcycle routes and roads allowing use by all vehicles. There are also numerous user-created routes. The motorized and mechanized enthusiasts are very interested in keeping and expanding recreation opportunities in this area.

#### *Other Features of Value*

The area offers unique opportunities to study rapid evolution and ecosystem development. Rare Piute and Bodfish cypress trees grow in the area. Both of these species have extremely limited ranges. The area includes Long Canyon Research Natural Area, Inspiration Point Inventoried Roadless Area and Bodfish Piute Cypress Botanical Area.

#### **Manageability**

The biggest concern is the ability of the agency to resolve resource issues related to mining impacts, in particular Superfund (Comprehensive Environmental Response, Compensation, and Liability Act or CERCLA) sites. Superfund repositories are located at the north end of Alaska Flat, on Erskine Creek and at French Meadow. To address environmental risks from hazardous mining waste, these sites could require vehicle access and operation of heavy equipment. The repository for the Bright Star mine requires regular maintenance to stabilize. These activities could include the operation of heavy equipment and require vehicle access. The French Meadow repository is new and may need additional work in the future to stabilize. CERCLA work is proposed at the Jenette-Grant mine where arsenic-laden tailings are being eroded by Erskine Creek (which runs down into the community of Lake Isabella). If this area was designated a wilderness, the agency's ability to maintain and address these sites would be foreclosed and would have health and safety consequences. Outside of the environmental hazard, repositories have the potential to impact visual and auditory qualities. Repositories are also sterile and do not regenerate vegetation.

Designation of wilderness would affect recreation use in this remote location. The off highway vehicle community is concerned about losing access and motorized opportunities in the Piute Mountains and is actively engaged in promoting the additions of many user-created routes to the existing travel management system. These recreation advocates for motorized use volunteer many thousands of hours to maintain trails, and have created a destination motorized trail system in this area which attracts expert riders from many states and other countries.

Motorized use in the semi-primitive nonmotorized area of the Piutes is discussed in the mediated settlement agreement 1990 and allows for one motorized trail in the interim and until an environmental analysis could be completed.

## Summary of Potential Suitability for Inclusion in the National Wilderness Preservation System

Motorized trails and significant and substantially noticeable mining impacts have had a significant impact on wilderness characteristics in other portions of the unit. Motorized access to this area is needed to maintain CERCLA sites.

Three designated special interest areas testify to the unique natural resources of the area. This polygon presents an opportunity to protect ecological groups that may be minimally represented in the National Wilderness Preservation System. Ecological groups with less than 5 percent of their national extent in the National Wilderness Preservation System comprise 3,407 acres. Ecological groups with between 10 and 20 percent of their national extent in the National Wilderness Preservation System comprise an additional 12,881 acres. (For map see Exhibit B – Sequoia National Forest Evaluation Maps – Evaluation Map G.)

### **Polygon 1427 (Clear Creek, Paiute Mountains)**

#### General Description

Polygon 1427 is a mid-elevation mountainous area primarily of oak woodland with brush located at lower elevations and conifer forest at higher elevations. The unit is 6,747 acres of land located in the Piute Mountains on the southern edge of the Sequoia National Forest outside the Giant Sequoia National Monument. The area was heavily occupied during the Gold Rush and cabin and mines abound in the area.

National Vegetation Classification System data indicates 5 percent of the area of the polygon (319 acres) consists of ecological groups that have less than 5 percent of their national extent protected in the National Wilderness Preservation System. This polygon also contains 6 ecological groups with a total area of 1,383 acres which have less than 20 percent of their national extent protected in the National Wilderness Preservation System. Each of these ecological groups, however, comprises less than 1,000 acres in this polygon.

#### Wilderness Characteristics

##### *Degree the Area Generally Appears to be Affected Primarily by the Forces of Nature*

The area has one existing motorcycle trail splitting the interior and shows signs of past timber harvesting, evidence of past mining activities and has been frequently used as a location for illegal marijuana gardens. Evidence of human control and manipulation is most noticeable along ridge tops and at higher elevations.

Soil condition is fairly stable but poorly developed for vegetation due to steep terrain and high incidence of rock outcrop. Significant soil erosion has occurred from severe fire effects. There are downstream flash flooding and debris flows. Hydrologic conditions are steep bedrock-defined streams that are mostly intermittent.

There are 9 active lode mining claims and 22 active placer mining claims throughout T. 27, R. 32, in sections 3, 10, 11 and 19. There are 3 active lode mining claims and 55 active placer mining claims throughout T. 27, R. 31, sections 1, 11, 12, 13, 16, 24, 26, 33 and 34. There are 3 active lode mining claims and 55 active placer mining claims throughout T. 27, R. 31, sections 1, 11, 12, 13, 16, 24, 26, 33 and 34.

The area is located within the Valley View Mining District. The Valley View Mining District was discovered in the 1870s and active until the 1940s or later. Mining machinery associated with the

Valley View Mine is located on Clear Creek below the mine. The mine is located on private property. Near the head of Clear Creek is Burton Mill, site of a stamp mill.

Although nonnative grasses are present, due to mostly human activities such as grazing and a few user-created off highway vehicle trails, their population is not increasing but remains stable. Although the area has been used for minor amounts of grazing and timber harvest, the effects have been minimal on animal populations and species composition. However, natural ecological function has been influenced by the development and use of roads.

Portions of the area have been affected by past timber sales and the entire unit has been impacted by 100 years of active fire suppression. The overall character of the area appears natural despite these past impacts.

#### *Opportunities for Solitude or Primitive and Unconfined Recreation*

Opportunity for solitude and primitive and unconfined recreation is limited by the presence of human activity. The sights and sounds of recreation activity, mainly off highway vehicle use, and the sights and sounds of activities taking place on lands adjacent to the analysis area are noticeable. Solitude is compromised by the volume of traffic on Saddle Springs Road and off highway vehicle use.

#### *Other Features of Value*

The area is located within the Valley View Mining District. The Valley View Mining District was discovered in the 1870s and active until the 1940s or later. Mining machinery associated with the Valley View Mine is located on Clear Creek below the mine. The mine is located on private property. Near the head of Clear Creek is Burton Mill, site of a stamp mill. Given the proximity of Area 1427 to Havilah and the Clear Creek Mining District, numerous mining features may be present.

#### **Manageability**

The biggest concern for manageability is motorized use. Routed access to private inholdings, cherry-stemmed roads and off highway vehicle trails, both system and nonsystem would provide for human intrusion and make manageability more difficult.

#### **Summary of Potential Suitability for Inclusion in the National Wilderness Preservation System**

Wilderness characteristics within this area have been affected by the existence of motorized use, evidence of past timber harvesting, evidence of past mining activities and use as a location for illegal marijuana gardens. Evidence of human control and manipulation is most noticeable along ridge tops and at higher elevations. The manageability of the area is complicated by the existence of numerous private inholdings and by utility corridors. Existing system trails were designated in the travel management decision.

This polygon presents a limited opportunity to protect ecological groups that may be minimally represented in the National Wilderness Preservation System. Ecological groups with less than 5 percent of their national extent in the National Wilderness Preservation System comprise a low number of acres. Ecological groups with between 10 and 20 percent of their national extent in the National Wilderness Preservation System comprise 1,383 acres. (For map see Exhibit B – Sequoia National Forest Evaluation Maps – Evaluation Map F and Evaluation Map G.)

## **Polygon 1429 (Pierce Valley – Adjacent to Sequoia and Kings Canyon National Parks Wilderness)**

### **General Description**

Polygon 1429 is a mid-elevation mountainous area contiguous with National Park Service wilderness. Vegetation is mixed conifer forests interspersed with granite outcrops, meadows and streams. The unit rises up toward wilderness and is in the Giant Sequoia National Monument. The unit is 2,729 acres and has a long thin shape with the National Park Service wilderness on the longest side with private inholding along the boundary. This is a very popular OHV area with a new developed staging area in the planning phase that will be located near the boundary.

National Vegetation Classification System data indicates less than 1 percent of the area of the polygon (3 acres) consists of ecological groups that have less than 5 percent of their national extent protected in the National Wilderness Preservation System. This polygon also contains 4 ecological groups with a total area of 922 acres which have less than 20 percent of their national extent protected in the National Wilderness Preservation System.

### **Wilderness Characteristics**

#### *Degree the Area Generally Appears to be Affected Primarily by the Forces of Nature*

About 50 percent of the area appears to be affected primarily by the forces of nature. Fire suppression may have an influence on species composition or tree density in some areas. The vegetative community that now exists would appear undisturbed by humans to a casual recreational visitor. The remaining 50 percent had fuels management and some logging. Adjacent recreational developments (Eshom Campground) are along a forest road along the northern edge of the unit but are screened by trees and topography. Streams, meadows, and riparian areas are beautiful and most are in good to excellent condition. Bull frogs are present at Pierce Pond. Pierce Valley Road and Forest Service Road 15S01 border the edge of the unit. These receive moderate traffic in summer except during holidays. County Road 469 is more than a quarter of a mile away. Much of the unit is screened from roads and nearby campgrounds by trees and provides an area away from the sights and sounds of humans.

The developments within the area include several Level 2 roads, a fence and corral at Pierce Valley and at Evans Meadow, and an earthen dam at Pierce Pond. None of these developments are seen from the majority of the unit. Roads could be decommissioned and restored or converted to trails. Access roads from previous timber management are unobtrusive. To the north edge is a developed recreation site, Eshom Creek Campground.

The area has ecological integrity with meadows, streams, and forested slopes in good condition. The absence of fire may have led to a shift in the species of trees in the area. Plant and animal communities are mostly intact and representative of the area. Giant sequoias, spotted owls, fisher and goshawks are present in unit. A spotted owl protected activity center is at Cherry Point. In 50 percent of the area, vegetation management and timber harvest exists and is not noticeable to visitors.

#### *Opportunities for Solitude or Primitive and Unconfined Recreation*

The area rises up toward the National Park Service wilderness. Rising topography and forested slopes allow for the feeling of solitude. Visitor use in lower elevations is near Eshom Campground which is on the northern boundary of this area. This unit is contiguous with National

Park Service wilderness along one boundary. It has a natural character with a few meadows and many granite outcrops. The existing Forest Service roads could be converted to trails or put to bed.

#### *Other Features of Value*

Access to the Redwood Mountains, giant sequoia, views and meadows add scenic value. The area is rich in prehistoric Native American archaeological sites associated with trade trails. Old forest species are present in the area and it provides habitat and connectivity for them.

#### **Manageability**

This area is popular for OHV activities and a new staging area is in the planning phase with a State funded OHV grant. Established use patterns would make management as wilderness problematic.

#### **Summary of Potential Suitability for Inclusion in the National Wilderness Preservation System**

The wilderness characteristics of this area are moderately intact. It is contiguous to the National Park wilderness and private property. The opportunities for solitude and primitive and unconfined recreation is impacted by State Road 469 and Eshom campground on the boundary, OHV activity within the unit. The area appears natural with mixed conifer forested areas. This polygon presents a limited opportunity to protect ecological groups that may be minimally represented in the National Wilderness Preservation System. Ecological groups with less than 5 percent of their national extent in the National Wilderness Preservation System comprise a low number of acres. Ecological groups with between 10 and 20 percent of their national extent in the National Wilderness Preservation System comprise 922 acres. (For map see Exhibit B – Sequoia National Forest Evaluation Maps – Evaluation Map A and Evaluation Map B.)

### **Polygon 1431 (Woodpecker Roadless – Adjacent to Domeland Wilderness)**

#### **General Description**

Polygon 1431 a mid-to-high elevation mountainous area primarily comprised of brush and annual grasses in the lower elevations, graduating to Sierran mixed conifer in the higher elevations. The area is 7,234 acres of land shaped like an irregular polygon. It contains 1,403 acres of the Woodpecker Inventoried Roadless Area. It is directly adjacent to the Domeland Wilderness which is located directly to the south of the polygon.

National Vegetation Classification System data indicates 7 percent of the area of the polygon (510 acres) consists of ecological groups that have less than 5 percent of their national extent protected in the National Wilderness Preservation System. This polygon also contains 44 ecological groups with a total area of 468 acres which have less than 20 percent of their national extent protected in the National Wilderness Preservation System.

#### **Wilderness Characteristics**

##### *Degree the Area Generally Appears to be Affected Primarily by the Forces of Nature*

Some areas of this unit contain clear-cuts, roads, OHV routes, plantations and many other developments. A portion of this polygon however is natural in appearance, except for a small number of spur roads identified in Travel Analysis Subpart A as “roads not likely needed.” The

unit was burned as part of a backfire for the McNally Fire in 2002, with varying intensity and effects. The resulting burned habitat was largely within the natural range of variation. There has been very limited areas of past timber harvest within the polygon. Intensive sheep and cattle grazing occurred from the 1860s to the mid-1900s. There is currently moderate cattle grazing in the area (Fish Creek allotment), however most of the area has limited forage value. The area is very lightly visited by recreationists due to limited access and no facilities.

The only developments within the area are livestock structures including water troughs, fence line and corrals, and two motorcycle trails, Beach Ridge and Mahogany. Sherman Pass Road and other motorcycle trails are adjacent to the polygon to the east. Several meadow and riparian areas (critical aquatic refuges) are located within the polygon in differing stages of health, ranging from poor to good condition.

The area has been affected by past sheep and cattle grazing, current cattle grazing, wildfire and a limited amount of timber harvest. The area does contain several Forest Service sensitive species including the fisher, slender salamanders, and historic detections of willow flycatcher. The area includes a majority of the Bald Mountain Botanical Area that provides habitat for numerous rare plants. The overall character of the area appears natural.

#### *Opportunities for Solitude or Primitive and Unconfined Recreation*

The area has little visitation and opportunities for solitude are good. Development and signage is scarce and the area is remote providing opportunities for primitive and unconfined recreation experiences when considered as an expansion of the exiting Dome Land Wilderness. A special use permit is issued to Edwards Air Force Base for their pilot wilderness survival training occurs approximately five times per year and attests to the area's wilderness character.

#### *Other Features of Value*

The Bald Mountain Botanical Area and the Fish Creek Canyon with interesting geologic features (basalt caps) provide a very unique and high value special resource that contributes to the wilderness character of the area. The area is separated from the South Sierra Wilderness to the north east by only the Sherman Pass Road.

#### **Manageability**

Limited access, location to other wilderness, and the remote location facilitates manageability as wilderness. The special use permit issued to Edwards Air Force Base for their pilot wilderness survival training could be problematic.

#### **Summary of Potential Suitability for Inclusion in the National Wilderness Preservation System**

The area has good potential as wilderness based on its wilderness characteristics and manageability. It is located adjacent to the Domeland Wilderness, contains 1,403 acres of the Woodpecker Inventoried Roadless Area, and encompasses the Bald Mountain Botanical Area. It is very lightly used primarily as grazing lands. The area appears natural for the most part with little signs of development or the presence of "the imprints of man's work" but does experience Air Force pilot wilderness survival training approximately five times a year. Combined with the potential of the Dome Land Wilderness opportunities for solitude and primitive and unconfined recreation are good.

This polygon presents a limited opportunity to protect ecological groups that may be minimally represented in the National Wilderness Preservation System. Ecological groups with less than 5 percent of their national extent in the National Wilderness Preservation System comprise 510 acres. Ecological groups with between 10 and 20 percent of their national extent in the National Wilderness Preservation System comprise 468 acres. (For map see Exhibit B – Sequoia National Forest Evaluation Maps – Evaluation Map D.)

## **Polygon 1432 (Blackrock Mountain – Adjacent to Golden Trout Wilderness)**

### **General Description**

Polygon 1432 is high elevation mountainous area primarily comprised of Sierran mixed conifer in the higher elevations with a scattering of shrubs and herbaceous grasses. The area is 1,134 acres of land shaped like an irregular polygon with roads on the all boundaries except where the parcel abuts to the wilderness and one cherry stemmed road dividing the area in half. There is a motorized trail across the polygon intersecting all roads. It is located adjacent to the Golden Trout Wilderness which is located directly to the north of the polygon.

National Vegetation Classification System data indicates 1 acre consists of ecological groups that have less than 5 percent of their national extent protected in the National Wilderness Preservation System. This polygon also contains 3 ecological groups with a total area of 30 acres which have less than 20 percent of their national extent protected in the National Wilderness Preservation System.

### **Wilderness Characteristics**

#### *Degree the Area Generally Appears to be Affected Primarily by the Forces of Nature*

With the exception of existing roads and motorized trails, the natural character of the unit has very limited impacts from current human uses. There has been past cattle grazing and this use continues in the area which has limited forage value. The area is visited by recreationists with one motorized trail and multiple open roads for vehicle access. The lack of facilities helps keep visitation low and limit the “imprints of man’s work” and the area appears to be affected primarily by the forces of nature.

The area has been affected by past and current cattle grazing. The only developments within the area are livestock structures, 1 trail designed for motorcycles (Blackrock Mountain) and 1 trail designed for pack and saddle use (Beach Meadow). Several riparian areas, but no meadows, are located within the polygon and are in good condition. The area provides suitable habitat for several forest service sensitive species including the marten and slender salamanders. The overall character of the area appears natural.

#### *Opportunities for Solitude or Primitive and Unconfined Recreation*

The area has very little visitation or signs of development within its boundaries other than the grazing allotment structures and use associated with two trails. The presence and use of motorized vehicles on roads and one trail would interfere with opportunities for solitude or primitive and unconfined recreation.

#### *Other Features of Value*

The polygon contains a contiguous area of red fir forest that provides a high value special resource that contributes to the wilderness character of the area.

## Manageability

Motorized activity adds challenges to the ability of the agency to manage the area as wilderness especially in this remote location which is close to an extensive system of popular motorized routes. Enforcement would be difficult.

## Summary of Potential Suitability for Inclusion in the National Wilderness Preservation System

Although the area is adjacent to the Golden Trout Wilderness, the presence of roads and trails detract from the naturalness of the area and its potential suitability for inclusion in the National Wilderness Preservation System, Recreation use is light , with most of the use occurring on two motorized trails and the existing road system, as well as grazing activities.

This polygon does not present an opportunity to protect ecological groups that may be minimally represented in the National Wilderness Preservation System. Ecological groups with less than 5 percent of their national extent in the National Wilderness Preservation System comprise a low number of acres. Ecological groups with between 10 and 20 percent of their national extent in the National Wilderness Preservation System comprise 30 acres. (For map see Exhibit B – Sequoia National Forest Evaluation Maps – Evaluation Map D.)

## **Polygon 1434 (Agnew Roadless – Adjacent to Monarch Wilderness)**

### General Description

Polygon 1434 is a mid-elevation mountainous area primarily of oak woodland with brush located along the southern edge of the Kings River, adjacent to Highway 180, which provides access into Kings Canyon National Park. Higher elevations within the unit are blanketed with stands of old and secondary growth pine. Scenic overlook pullouts along Highway 180, such as Yucca Point, provide panoramic vistas into the area. The unit is 3,726 acres of land shaped like a punctuated circle. It is contiguous with the Monarch Wilderness and the King River Special Management Area. It is within the Agnew Inventoried Roadless Area and the Giant Sequoia National Monument and contains Giant Sequoia groves.

National Vegetation Classification System data indicates 1 percent of the area of the polygon (26 acres) consists of ecological groups that have less than 5 percent of their national extent protected in the National Wilderness Preservation System. This polygon also contains 6 ecological groups with a total area of 1,101 acres which have less than 20 percent of their national extent protected in the National Wilderness Preservation System. Each of these ecological groups, however, comprises less than 1,000 acres in this polygon.

### Wilderness Characteristics

#### *Degree the Area Generally Appears to be Affected Primarily by the Forces of Nature*

One-third of the unit is unaffected by intentional human manipulation. The remaining two-thirds has been impacted by historic and more recent logging with road scars with adjacent recreational developments. One hundred years of active fire suppression has impacted the nature and distribution of vegetation across the entire unit. The vegetative community that now exists would not appear unnatural in many area to a casual recreational visitor.

The only developments within the area are a Level 2 road, which has been identified as not needed, and a permitted water pipe with associated water rights to an adjacent private property

parcel at Kings Canyon Lodge. The appearance of the small diameter pipe is not obtrusive. Access roads from previous timber clearing operations are healing over and not obtrusive.

Immediately adjacent to this unit are several highly developed recreational facilities along Highway 180, a major highway corridor that provides entry into the adjacent Kings Canyon National Park, as well as a Forest Service heliport. There are no grazing, mining or administrative facilities. Motorized use is limited to one Level 2 road that has been identified as not needed. There is no obtrusive development within the unit.

One-third of the unit has been affected by past timber harvest and most of the unit has been impacted by 110 years of active fire suppression. The overall character of the area appears natural despite these past impacts. The area contains rare plants and animals such as goshawk, Pacific fisher, spotted owl, Hall's daisy, Giant Sequoia groves, several species of slender salamander and possibly Condon's lewisia. Non-native fish may exist.

#### *Opportunities for Solitude or Primitive and Unconfined Recreation*

Given the rugged topography there is minimal recreational use on the steeper slopes. There are no National Forest System trails within the unit. There is quite a bit of hiking and mountain biking use during the summer months on the old timber roads. At Ten Mile Creek there is a heavily used user-created trail in the vicinity of the permitted water pipe.

Highway 180 is a major tourist travel route during the summer months into Kings Canyon National Park. There are several major recreational facilities along this road, adjacent to this unit, such as the Kings Canyon Lodge. Traffic noise and noise from congregations of people along the highway corridor create an atmosphere where the feeling of remote solitude is not possible. Additionally, there is a heliport along the boundary of the unit. In times of active fire suppression, the number of helicopters coming and going out of the heliport could be quite disruptive to recreational visitors. Conversely, the inclusion of this unit into the wilderness system might protect the audible qualities of wilderness in the adjacent Monarch Wilderness and halt further development along the existing boundaries. It would also preserve the wilderness vistas that are interpreted through signage at car pullouts on the adjacent Highway 180. The Yucca Point Vista Point provides a panoramic view of the entire unit and on into the adjacent Monarch Wilderness.

#### *Other Features of Value*

Historic redwood logging sites and features such as the Ten Mile Creek Flume provide insight into forest management practices in a past pioneering era. The sheer size of the trees and the work to render them into usable forest products with primitive logging tools is a story of adventure, risk and the evolution of land management practices through time. The evolving relationship between the American people and the Giant Sequoia is also a long and fascinating story. Today, the Giant Sequoia is an iconic symbol of the strength and resiliency of the American wilderness where once, long ago it was viewed by many as only a standing forest product waiting to be cut.

#### **Manageability**

The one manageability concern is the presence of the permitted water ditch and associated water rights to an adjacent private property owner. This easement was awarded through court order and removal is not possible. This water line could be removed from the unit.

## Summary of Potential Suitability for Inclusion in the National Wilderness Preservation System

The wilderness characteristics of this area are largely intact. It is contiguous to the Monarch Wilderness, Kings River Special Management Area, within the Giant Sequoia National Monument and the Agnew Inventoried Roadless Area. Given the steepness of the terrain, it has no mining, trails or grazing and only one Level 2 road that has been identified as not needed. Although the qualities of trammled and undeveloped have been affected by past logging activity and associated developments, these are not noticeable to the average visitor.

The area appears natural for the most part with healing timber access roads and secondary growth timber. It provides habitat to a number of rare plants and animals including goshawk, Pacific fisher, spotted owl, Hall's daisy and possibly Condon's lewisia. The area is important for habitat connectivity for the Pacific fisher as well as multiple species of slender salamander. This polygon presents a limited opportunity to protect ecological groups that may be minimally represented in the National Wilderness Preservation System. Ecological groups with less than 5 percent of their national extent in the National Wilderness Preservation System comprise a low number of acres. Ecological groups with between 10 and 20 percent of their national extent in the National Wilderness Preservation System comprise 1,101 acres.

Groves of important Giant Sequoia trees also grow within the unit. The reintroduction of a more natural fire regime would restore the ecosystem to one whose appearance is the result of natural processes and provide enhanced habitat opportunities to the rare plants and animals within the unit. Interpretive and educational opportunities exist for the old redwood logging features that remain 100 years after their use and abandonment. (For map see Exhibit B – Sequoia National Forest Evaluation Maps – Evaluation Map A.)

## Sierra National Forest

### **Polygon 304 (Cat's Head Mountain)**

#### General Description

This area includes 5,916 acres of mixed brush, conifers and granite knobs north of Pine Flat Reservoir.

National Vegetation Classification System data indicates none of the polygon consists of ecological groups that have less than 5 percent of their national extent protected in the National Wilderness Preservation System. This polygon also contains 8 ecological groups with a total area of 5,181 acres which have less than 20 percent of their national extent protected in the National Wilderness Preservation System. The most prevalent are California lower montane blue oak-foothill pine woodland and savanna and Mediterranean California mixed oak woodland.

#### Wilderness Characteristics

##### *Degree the Area Generally Appears to be Affected Primarily by the Forces of Nature*

The area was grazed historically. It is within the currently grazed Sycamore Allotment, which is permitted grazing March through June. Development related to grazing may be present. Fire suppression has also occurred here. The area is partially bordered by roads, private property and the Pine Flat Reservoir. Grazing structures are cattle-guards, drift fences and boundary fences and visible cattle trails; fire suppression historically utilizes firebreaks to prevent fire traveling to

specific areas, such as in Pine Flat Reservoir. Recreation at Pine Flat Reservoir includes noisy water craft and quiet fishing boats.

Numerous introduced plants are present, especially herbaceous species in the more open areas. Non-native annual grasses and forbs from Europe are abundant. Italian thistle, tocolote and milk thistle are present. Non-native vegetation population trends are unknown, but likely increasing. The understory is not primarily natural. Annual grasses alter response to disturbance of the plant community.

Contiguous habitat for fisheries and wildlife species exists within the area. The California Department of Fish and Wildlife stock trout in adjacent waterways. There are no overall significant impacts to species populations, although fishing and hunting occur.

#### *Opportunities for Solitude or Primitive and Unconfined Recreation*

The area is small in size and adjacent to private property. Recreational activities include hiking, riding, fishing, and hunting. Recreation at Pine Flat Reservoir includes noisy motor boats and quiet fishing boats. Due to the size of the lake and adjacent topography, the sounds from water craft can be heard from a considerable distance.

#### *Other Features of Value*

The following species and habitats are present: potential habitat for California red-legged frog (Endangered Species Act listed); potential and occupied habitat for western pond turtle, and potential habitat for foothill yellow-legged frog (Forest Service sensitive species).

This area is culturally sensitive and is considered a special interest area from tribes in the area. Tribes in this area include: Cold Springs Rancheria of Mono Indians, Big Sandy Rancheria of Mono Indians and North Fork Mono tribe and the Haslett Basin Traditional Committee (Holkoma Mono). There are cultural and historical sites that provide opportunities for important research and traditional ceremonial use.

#### **Manageability**

The area is small in size, has an irregular shape and has adjacent private property; these factors would make management as wilderness difficult.

#### **Summary of Potential Suitability for Inclusion in the National Wilderness Preservation System**

The area has an existing cattle allotment with existing structures, nonnative plants and an irregular shape. There is a lack of outstanding characteristics and evidence of past timber management and it is difficult to manage this area to preserve or improve any existing wilderness qualities. This polygon presents a moderate opportunity to protect ecological groups that may be minimally represented in the National Wilderness Preservation System. Ecological groups with less than 5 percent of their national extent in the National Wilderness Preservation System comprise none of the area. Ecological groups with between 10 and 20 percent of their national extent in the National Wilderness Preservation System, however, comprise 5,181 acres. (For map see Exhibit C – Sierra National Forest Evaluation Maps – Evaluation Map C.)

## **Polygon 315 (Sycamore Springs)**

### **General Description**

This area includes 17,908 acres of primarily mixed conifer forest southwest of Wishon Reservoir.

National Vegetation Classification System data indicates 2 percent of the area of the polygon (430 acres) consists of ecological groups that have less than 5 percent of their national extent protected in the National Wilderness Preservation System. This polygon also contains 8 ecological groups with a total area of 10,600 acres which have less than 20 percent of their national extent protected in the National Wilderness Preservation System. The most prevalent are California Central Valley mixed oak savanna, California lower montane blue oak-foothill pine woodland and savanna, Mediterranean California mesic mixed conifer forest and woodland, and Mediterranean California mixed oak woodland.

### **Wilderness Characteristics**

#### *Degree the Area Generally Appears to be Affected Primarily by the Forces of Nature*

The area includes the Teakettle Experimental Forest which has been extensively manipulated for forest research activities involving thinning and burning of forest plots. The unit is within the Patterson Mountain and Thompson cattle allotments which are currently grazed March through September. Fire suppression and fish stocking may also occur in the area.

The area is surrounded by an extensive network of roads, power lines and other facilities. Development associated with grazing is cattle trails and possibly some fencing to prevent cattle from entering meadows. Fence Meadow Lookout (built in 1934) is visible on the northwest corner of this area, though the lookout has great deal of facilities connected with the peak it is outside the unit.

No nonnative species are documented, but likely included Spanish broom, Italian thistle, and tocolote.

The area is not within the natural range of variability for vegetation community (natural range of variability is often used to describe disturbance processes, and the ecosystem variability that these disturbances create), with a very small portion affected by fire within last 20-30 years. Fire exclusion has contributed to alteration of the herbaceous understory in openings at lower elevations. The area has several places with a heavy dead and down fuel component. Teakettle Experimental Forest has had extensive treatments completed within it, both mechanical and prescribed fire.

Contiguous habitat for fisheries and wildlife species exists within the area. The California Department of Fish and Wildlife stock trout in adjacent waterways. There are no overall significant impacts to species populations, although fishing and hunting occur.

#### *Opportunities for Solitude or Primitive and Unconfined Recreation*

The historic Fence Meadow Lookout would be visible to over 50 percent of the interior of the unit. Recreational activities may include whitewater kayaking, canyoneering, hiking, fishing and hunting. Dinkey Creek provides an outstanding opportunity for challenge and self-reliance for kayakers and canyoneers.

### *Other Features of Value*

Rare plants include *Tauschia howellii* at Patterson Mountain. Rare ecosystems include fens in many of the meadows at higher elevations of the unit.

Teakettle Experimental Forest is within this area. There are no research natural areas or other special interest areas.

This area is culturally sensitive and is considered a special interest area from tribes in the area. Tribes in this area include: Cold Springs Rancheria of Mono Indians, Big Sandy Rancheria of Mono Indians and North Fork Mono tribe and the Haslett Basin Traditional Committee (Holkoma Mono). There are cultural and historical sites adding to the wilderness characteristics of this area by providing important scientific and cultural values.

The following species/habitats are present: potential/suitable habitat, occupied habitat, and proposed critical habitat for the Yosemite toad, potential/suitable habitat for Sierra Nevada yellow-legged frog, and California red-legged frog (Endangered Species Act listed); potential/suitable habitat for western pond turtle, and potential habitat for foothill yellow-legged frog (Forest Service sensitive species).

Numerous waterfalls exist on Dinkey and its tributaries in the area, followed by eroded, deep plunge pools. Black Rock, Patterson Bluffs and Indian Rock are highly scenic granite features.

The area includes old-growth ponderosa pine forest.

### **Manageability**

The area has an irregular shape; however, if the boundary was reshaped to follow the Black Rock ridge line, it would leave the extensively managed Teakettle Experimental Range outside the boundary. With the change in boundary, the lookout would still be visible to over 50 percent of the unit, however for some this would be a historic feature or landmark to be used for canyoneering.

### **Summary of Potential Suitability for Inclusion in the National Wilderness Preservation System**

The area would need to be reshaped to improve manageability to protect wilderness characteristics. There are numerous waterfalls on Dinkey Creek, highly scenic granite features, rare plants and aquatic wildlife. This polygon presents a moderate opportunity to protect ecological groups that may be minimally represented in the National Wilderness Preservation System. Ecological groups with less than 5 percent of their national extent in the National Wilderness Preservation System comprise a low number of acres. Ecological groups with between 10 and 20 percent of their national extent in the National Wilderness Preservation System, however, comprise 10,600 acres. (For map see Exhibit C – Sierra National Forest Evaluation Maps – Evaluation Map C.)

## **Polygon 330 (North Fork Kings River)**

### **General Description**

This area includes 7,804 acres of primarily granite domes and slabs south of Wishon Reservoir. The North Fork of the Kings River bisects the polygon. The Granite Gorge is part of the Kings River and is very deep and very narrow. The Rancheria Creek and other streams create dramatic waterfalls into the Kings River.

National Vegetation Classification System data indicates 9 percent of the area of the polygon (736 acres) consists of ecological groups that have less than 5 percent of their national extent protected in the National Wilderness Preservation System. This polygon also contains 8 ecological groups with a total area of 5,877 acres which have less than 20 percent of their national extent protected in the National Wilderness Preservation System. The most prevalent is Mediterranean California mesic mixed conifer forest and woodland.

### Wilderness Characteristics

#### *Degree the Area Generally Appears to be Affected Primarily by the Forces of Nature*

The area had possible historic grazing or crossing of cattle to the high country. There is no current grazing within this area even though it is within active allotments (Patterson Mountain and Collins) due to very steep terrain. Stream flows have been altered by the Wishon Dam. Fish stocking and fire suppression occur in the area.

The area is bordered by roads and the Wishon Reservoir. Portions of the unit are within the Pacific Gas and Electric Helms hydropower project. Plant species composition in the river and processes are altered due to changing water flows.

The area is not within the natural range of variability for the vegetation community, with only a very small portion affected by fire within last 20-30 years. The area has several places with a heavy dead and down fuel component which could lead to higher than normal fire effects. There are probably some invasive plants present, such as bull thistle. Contiguous habitat for fisheries and wildlife species exists within the area. The California Department of Fish and Wildlife stock trout in adjacent waterways. There are no overall significant impacts to species populations, although fishing and hunting occur. Riparian conditions are mostly unknown, but the river is altered by the Wishon dam.

#### *Opportunities for Solitude or Primitive and Unconfined Recreation*

This narrow area has opportunities for solitude or recreation with some of the unit dominated by the Wishon Dam and surrounded by roads. The interior of the river canyon has great potential for solitude. There is one trail in the unit. Recreational activities could include hiking, horseback riding, fishing, hunting and sightseeing.

#### *Other Features of Value*

This area is culturally sensitive and is considered a special interest area from tribes in the area. Tribes in this area include: Cold Springs Rancheria of Mono Indians, Big Sandy Rancheria of Mono Indians and North Fork Mono tribe and the Haslett Basin Traditional Committee (Holkoma Mono). There are cultural and historical sites adding to the wilderness characteristics of this area by providing important scientific and cultural values.

The following species and habitats are present: potential/suitable habitat for Yosemite toad, potential/suitable habitat for Sierra Nevada yellow-legged frog, and California red-legged frog (Endangered Species Act listed); potential/suitable habitat for western pond turtle, and potential habitat for foothill yellow-legged frog (Forest Service sensitive species).

The area is bisected by the North Fork of the Kings River. Directly south of the Wishon Reservoir is the Granite Gorge. The Granite Gorge is a narrow river canyon deeper than the Grand Canyon in Arizona. The unit includes the Kings Canyon Geological Area, a network of caverns and

related features within a marble unit covering 388 acres of the Lower Kings River Roof Pendent, a geological feature.

### Manageability

The area is small in size and is long, narrow and irregularly shaped, making management as wilderness challenging.

### Summary of Potential Suitability for Inclusion in the National Wilderness Preservation System

The area within the Granite Gorge is suitable for inclusion; however, the portion of the unit within the Federal Energy Regulatory Commission boundary would need to be removed. There are endangered as well as nonnative species. This polygon presents a moderate opportunity to protect ecological groups that may be minimally represented in the National Wilderness Preservation System. Ecological groups with less than 5 percent of their national extent in the National Wilderness Preservation System comprise a low number of acres. Ecological groups with between 10 and 20 percent of their national extent in the National Wilderness Preservation System, however, comprise 5,877 acres. (For map see Exhibit C – Sierra National Forest Evaluation Maps – Evaluation Map C.)

## Polygon 357 (Soaproot)

### General Description

This area includes 5,374 acres of mixed brush, conifers, and granite knobs in the foothills to the north of Pine Flat Reservoir and south of Shaver Lake.

National Vegetation Classification System data indicates 1 percent of the polygon (37 acres) consists of ecological groups that have less than 5 percent of their national extent protected in the National Wilderness Preservation System. This polygon also contains 5 ecological groups with a total area of 2,390 acres which have less than 20 percent of their national extent protected in the National Wilderness Preservation System. The most prevalent is California lower montane blue oak-foothill pine woodland.

### Wilderness Characteristics

#### *Degree the Area Generally Appears to be Affected Primarily by the Forces of Nature*

The area was historically grazed. It is currently grazed from March through June as part of the Sycamore Allotment. The Soaproot area has been impacted by fire exclusion, railroad logging, and other impacts that resulted in significant alterations in ecosystem structure, composition, and connectivity. This includes overstocked forests with forest health issues and a high need for active vegetation management and restoration. Fire has been used in this polygon for under-burning to reduce the fuel loading. Contiguous habitat for fisheries and wildlife species exists within the area. The California Department of Fish and Wildlife stock trout in adjacent waterways. There are no overall significant impacts to species populations, although fishing and hunting occur.

The area is bordered by roads, a transmission line and private property; the transmission line is visible from within the unit. There is a small section in the northeast corner where a motorized trail under special use permit crosses into the unit. There is development associated with cattle grazing within the unit, such as a corral and loss of vegetation where salt blocks were placed. Because of proximity to roads and transmission lines, there are nonnative plants in openings, especially nonnative annual grasses. Tocolote, foxglove and bull thistle are also likely present

within the unit. These nonnative plants result in significant alterations in the ecosystem structure and composition.

#### *Opportunities for Solitude or Primitive and Unconfined Recreation*

There are no trails in the area. Recreational activities could include off-trail hiking, horseback riding, hunting and fishing. Opportunities are limited for potential visitors seeking challenge and self-reliance due to the small size of the area. With the roads and motorized trails it is expected the noise of the vehicles would be heard in the unit.

#### *Other Features of Value*

Rare Forest Service sensitive species plants are present in the area: golden lupine (*Lupinus citrinus* var. *citrinus*), and tree anemone (*Carpenteria californica*).

This area is culturally sensitive and is considered a special interest area from tribes in the area including: Cold Springs Rancheria of Mono Indians, Big Sandy Rancheria of Mono Indians and North Fork Mono tribe, and the Haslett Basin Traditional Committee (Holkoma Mono).

The following species and habitats are present: Potential habitat for California red-legged frog (Endangered Species Act listed) and potential and occupied habitat for western pond turtle and potential habitat for foothill yellow-legged frog (Forest Service sensitive species).

#### **Manageability**

The area is small and irregularly shaped; motorized traffic is audible and, in some places, visible from this area.

#### **Summary of Potential Suitability for Inclusion in the National Wilderness Preservation System**

The area generally appears natural and has limited opportunities for solitude and primitive and unconfined recreation. Wilderness characteristics are affected by an existing cattle allotment and nonnative plants. The area contains rare plants and is a culturally significant area. The small size and proximity to roads and powerlines makes it difficult to manage to preserve wilderness characteristics.

This polygon presents a limited opportunity to protect ecological groups that may be minimally represented in the National Wilderness Preservation System. Ecological groups with less than 5 percent of their national extent in the National Wilderness Preservation System comprise a low number of acres. Ecological groups with between 10 and 20 percent of their national extent in the National Wilderness Preservation System comprise 2,390 acres. (For map see Exhibit C – Sierra National Forest Evaluation Maps – Evaluation Map C.)

### **Polygon 441 (Bald Mountain)**

#### **General Description**

This area includes 6,892 acres of mixed brush, conifers and the large granitic dome of Bald Mountain east of Shaver Lake. National Vegetation Classification System data indicates 10 percent of the area of the polygon (111 acres) consists of ecological groups that have less than 5 percent of their national extent protected in the National Wilderness Preservation System. This polygon also contains 5 ecological groups with a total area of 1,216 acres which have less than 20

percent of their national extent protected in the National Wilderness Preservation System. The most prevalent is Mediterranean California mesic mixed conifer forest and woodland.

### Wilderness Characteristics

#### *Degree the Area Generally Appears to be Affected Primarily by the Forces of Nature*

The area contains an extensive network of National Forest System motorized trails. The area is bordered by roads and private property. Because of proximity to roads and private property, there are nonnative plants in openings, especially nonnative annual grasses. Tocolote, foxglove and bull thistle are also likely present. Contiguous habitat for fisheries and wildlife species exists within the area. The Lahontan cutthroat trout is in Rock Creek on the east boundary of the unit.

#### *Opportunities for Solitude or Primitive and Unconfined Recreation*

There are no opportunities for solitude or primitive and unconfined recreation due to the extensive network of motorized trails in the unit.

#### *Other Features of Value*

Rare plants which are Forest Service sensitive include the golden lupine (*Lupinus citrinus* var. *citrinus*) and the tree anemone (*Carpenteria californica*).

This area is culturally sensitive and is considered a special interest area from tribes in the area which include: Cold Springs Rancheria of Mono Indians, Big Sandy Rancheria of Mono Indians and North Fork Mono tribe and the Haslett Basin Traditional Committee (Holkoma Mono). There are cultural and historical sites adding to the wilderness characteristics of this area by providing important scientific and cultural values.

The following species and habitats are present: potential habitat for California red-legged frog (Endangered Species Act listed); potential and occupied habitat for western pond turtle and potential habitat for foothill yellow-legged frog (Forest Service sensitive species).

### Manageability

The area is small in size, has an irregular shape and has approved motorized uses and adjacent land uses that affect the solitude within the area.

### Summary of Potential Suitability for Inclusion in the National Wilderness Preservation System

The area has nonnative plants and is small in size. The area has extensive motorized trails and roads and therefore there is a lack of outstanding wilderness characteristics, and difficulty managing the area to preserve or improve any existing wilderness qualities. (For map see Exhibit C – Sierra National Forest Evaluation Maps – Evaluation Map C.)

## **Polygon 539 (Adjacent to Dinkey Lakes Wilderness)**

### General Description

This area includes a total of 48,213 acres of primarily forested slopes bordering the western edge of the Dinkey Lakes Wilderness. The area is bisected by the Coyote and Swamp motorized trails. This unit includes 1,895 acres of surface water for Courtright Reservoir managed for low speed motorized boats.

National Vegetation Classification System data indicates 3 percent of the area of the polygon (1,272 acres) consists of ecological groups that have less than 5 percent of their national extent protected in the National Wilderness Preservation System. Each of these ecological groups comprises less than 1,000 acres in this polygon. This polygon also contains 5 ecological groups with a total area of 1,850 acres which have less than 20 percent of their national extent protected in the National Wilderness Preservation System. The most prevalent is Mediterranean California mesic mixed conifer forest and woodland.

### Wilderness Characteristics

#### *Degree the Area Generally Appears to be Affected Primarily by the Forces of Nature*

Historic and current grazing occurs in the Dinkey, Blasingame, Patterson and Helms (vacant) Allotments, where cow-calf pairs are permitted from June through September. The Blasingame Allotment currently has 265 cow-calf pairs permitted. The historic and current grazing has produced a network of cattle trails. Fire suppression is ongoing in this area. Streams and lakes have been stocked with nonnative trout.

The area is surrounded by an extensive road network and is crossed by the Swamp and Coyote motorized trails. Boundary development also includes the China Peak ski area, Courtright Reservoir and the Dusy-Ershim, Brewer, Strawberry Lake and Mirror Lake motorized trails. There are private parcels within the area.

There are likely scattered patches of bull thistle and woolly mullein associated with grazing within the unit; roads, off highway vehicle trail transfer noxious weeds to the boundaries and the wind and rain move the seeds into the polygon.

The area is within natural range of variability for vegetation communities (natural range of variability is often used to describe disturbance processes, and the ecosystem variability that these disturbances create), with a very small portion affected by fire within last 20-30 years. Some portions of this area have a heavy dead and down component which could lead to higher than normal fire effects. Species composition is primarily natural, except for at the ski area and any areas that may have changed due to fire exclusion.

Contiguous habitat for fisheries and wildlife species exists within the area. The California Department of Fish and Wildlife stock trout in adjacent waterways. There are no overall significant impacts to species populations, although fishing and hunting occur.

Meadow and riparian condition is not known. There are several meadows and fens in the area.

#### *Opportunities for Solitude or Primitive and Unconfined Recreation*

Primitive opportunities exist in areas away from existing motorized trails and near the current wilderness boundary. Recreational activities include hiking, horseback riding, fishing, hunting, camping, rock climbing and general sightseeing. By removing the sections associated with motorized trails, this area is contiguous with the Dinkey Lakes Wilderness and would provide the opportunities for solitude.

#### *Other Features of Value*

There is a rare plant present, the short-leaved hulsea (Forest Service sensitive species). There are rare ecosystems present, fens/peatlands in some of the meadows and possibly lakeshores (Arkansas Meadow confirmed 2014 field season).

This area is culturally sensitive and is considered a special interest area from tribes in the area including North Fork Rancheria of Mono Indians, North Fork Mono tribe, Big Sandy Rancheria of Mono Indians, Picayune Rancheria of Chukchansi Indians, Cold Springs Rancheria of Mono Indians and Native American Organizations like the Mono Nation. There are cultural and historical sites adding to the wilderness characteristics of this area by providing important scientific and cultural values.

The following species and habitats are present: potential/suitable habitat, occupied habitat, proposed critical habitat for Yosemite toad and potential/suitable habitat for Sierra Nevada yellow-legged frog (Endangered Species Act listed).

The area contains dozens of lakes and meadows situated in glacier-carved bowls. Dinkey Dome and Marble Point are both large, impressive edifices that rise above Dinkey Creek and one of its tributaries.

### **Manageability**

Manageability is compromised by the, intruding roads, several adjacent popular motorized trails, a boundary that is not easily topographically definable, extensive surrounding dispersed recreation impacts, extensive grazing and fire suppression needs.

### **Summary of Potential Suitability for Inclusion in the National Wilderness Preservation System**

The area can be reshaped to remove those areas that include motorized recreation and the ski resort under special use permit. The area has impressive granitic domes, endangered species including rare plants and provides primitive opportunities. This polygon presents a limited opportunity to protect ecological groups that may be minimally represented in the National Wilderness Preservation System. Ecological groups with less than 5 percent of their national extent in the National Wilderness Preservation System comprise 1,272 acres. Ecological groups with between 10 and 20 percent of their national extent in the National Wilderness Preservation System comprise 1,850 acres. Ecological groups with less than 10 percent of their national extent in the National Wilderness Preservation System comprise 715 acres. Ecological groups with less than 20 percent of their national extent in the National Wilderness Preservation System comprise an additional 1,216 acres. (For map see Exhibit C – Sierra National Forest Evaluation Maps – Evaluation Map B and Evaluation Map C.)

## **Polygon 557 (Peckinpah Creek)**

### **General Description**

This area includes 5,073 acres of oak woodland in the foothills to the southeast of Bass Lake and contains the South Fork Bluffs.

National Vegetation Classification System data indicates 1 percent of the area of the polygon (45 acres) consists of ecological groups that have less than 5 percent of their national extent protected in the National Wilderness Preservation System. This polygon also contains 6 ecological groups with a total area of 1,670 acres which have less than 20 percent of their national extent protected in the National Wilderness Preservation System. The most prevalent is Mediterranean California mesic mixed conifer forest and woodland.

## Wilderness Characteristics

### *Degree the Area Generally Appears to be Affected Primarily by the Forces of Nature*

The area includes past timber harvest units; timber harvest units include temporary roads, and potential for even aged stands. The area was historically and is currently grazed. It is partially within the Central Camp Allotment where 101 cow-calf pairs are permitted to graze from June 1 through September 30. There are a corral, holding fields, cattle trails and a cow camp in the unit. East from the southeast boundary of the unit is an active motorized recreation area on roads and motorized trails. The main impact would be vehicle noise in the unit, with visuals on the motor vehicles along the edges of the unit.

Naturalness of vegetation is affected by past timber harvest. Non-native plants are present in openings because of proximity to roads and residences. Because of the low elevation and proximity to Bass Lake and private land, there are nonnative annual grasses present, including cheat grass. Other nonnative weeds include velvet grass, bull thistle, woolly mullein and Klamath weed. The area was grazed historically and currently covers part of Central Camp Allotment and partially outside of the active allotment boundary.

Greater than 50 percent of this area (southern half) was affected by the North Fork Fire and Cascadel Fire in the 2000s where there continues to be a landscape scale change in vegetation type from oak, conifer and brush to snags and mostly brush component, making this area susceptible to another wildfire. Because of the fire effects, the vegetation in this area is within its natural range of variability. In the northern half the polygon is not within its natural range of variability, with dense vegetation and heavy dead and down fuel loads.

Contiguous habitat for fisheries and wildlife species exist within the area. The California Department of Fish and Wildlife stock trout in adjacent waterways. There are no overall significant impacts to species populations, although relatively limited fishing and hunting occurs. Stream conditions are unknown. There are only a few meadows.

### *Opportunities for Solitude or Primitive and Unconfined Recreation*

Opportunities for solitude may exist on the west and north sides with low solitude on the south and southeast sides due to popular and extensive road and motorized trail network. The unit is long and narrow allowing the potential for the noise from motorized vehicles on adjacent roads and motorized trails traveling across the unit. One nonmotorized trail crosses the area. Hiking, fishing and hunting are possible recreational activities. Opportunities for challenge and self-reliance are limited by the small size of the area.

### *Other Features of Value*

A rare plant, Rawson's flaming trumpet (*Collomia rawsoniana*) occurs along a few streams (Forest Service sensitive species).

The following species and habitats are present: potential/suitable for Yosemite toad, Sierra Nevada yellow-legged frog, and California red-legged frog (Endangered Species Act listed); potential habitat for western pond turtle, potential habitat for foothill yellow-legged frog (Forest Service Sensitive).

This area is culturally sensitive and is considered a special interest area from tribes in the area including North Fork Rancheria of Mono Indians, Picayune Rancheria of Chukchansi Tribe and North Fork Mono tribe.

The South Fork Bluffs is a predominate feature of the area.

### Manageability

This area is long, narrow and small in size.

### Summary of Potential Suitability for Inclusion in the National Wilderness Preservation System

This area has rare plants, aquatic endangered species, the predominate South Fork Bluffs, active grazing and is managed for timber harvest. This polygon presents a limited opportunity to protect ecological groups that may be minimally represented in the National Wilderness Preservation System. Ecological groups with less than 5 percent of their national extent in the National Wilderness Preservation System comprise a low number of acres. Ecological groups with between 10 and 20 percent of their national extent in the National Wilderness Preservation System comprise 1,670 acres. (For map see Exhibit C – Sierra National Forest Evaluation Maps – Evaluation Map B.)

### **Polygon 577 (Adjacent to Kaiser Wilderness)**

#### General Description

This area includes 7,127 acres of timbered slopes adjacent to the Kaiser Wilderness on its north, east, and south sides. The west side borders on the extensive development along Huntington Lake.

National Vegetation Classification System data indicates 1 percent of the area of the polygon (83 acres) consists of ecological groups that have less than 5 percent of their national extent protected in the National Wilderness Preservation System. This polygon also contains ecological groups with a total area of 1,700 acres which have less than 20 percent of their national extent protected in the National Wilderness Preservation System. The most prevalent is Mediterranean California mesic mixed conifer forest and woodland.

#### Wilderness Characteristics

##### *Degree the Area Generally Appears to be Affected Primarily by the Forces of Nature*

Grazing, logging, fire suppression and fish stocking occur in this area. The area is within 2 active cattle grazing allotments, Kaiser and Mount Tom. The area around Huntington Lake is closed to grazing. Otherwise, the area is permitted for grazing June through September. Grazing facilities include a corral off Stump Springs Road, noticeable cattle trails and stock drives.

Southern and western portions of this area were affected by the Aspen Fire, with some high severity effects changing the vegetation composition. It is within its natural range of variability (natural range of variability is often used to describe disturbance processes, and the ecosystem variability that these disturbances create). In the north-eastern and eastern portions, in proximity to a community and high use recreational facilities, it is highly susceptible to wildfire with a heavy dead and down component which could lead to higher than normal fire effects.

Scattered patches of bull thistle and woolly mullein are present, especially close to the development along Huntington Lake which consists of 491 recreation residences, six campgrounds, two picnic sites, two organized camps and two resorts.

Contiguous habitat for fisheries and wildlife species exists within the area. The California Department of Fish and Wildlife stock trout in reservoirs and waterways. There are no overall significant impacts to species populations, although relatively limited fishing and hunting occurs.

#### *Opportunities for Solitude or Primitive and Unconfined Recreation*

Opportunities for solitude exist primarily on the east and north sides of the polygon. On the south side, the area is adjacent to roads, campgrounds, recreation residences, organization camps and resorts, which affect opportunities for solitude and a primitive recreation experience. A few unmaintained hiking trails cross the area on the north and west sides. Popular trails cross the south side to access the Kaiser Wilderness from Huntington Lake. Recreational activities include hiking, horseback riding, fishing, hunting and sightseeing.

#### *Other Features of Value*

Rare plants include: short-leafed hulsea (*Hulsea brevifolia*, a Forest Service sensitive species); *Utricularia intermedia* in Huckleberry Meadow.

Huckleberry Meadow and several other meadows contain fens (peatland ecosystems).

The following species and habitats are present: potential/suitable habitat, occupied habitat, proposed critical habitat for Yosemite toad and potential/suitable habitat for Sierra Nevada yellow-legged frog (Endangered Species Act listed).

The area includes old-growth Sierra mixed-conifer forest.

This area is culturally sensitive and is considered a special interest area from tribes in the area including: Mono Nation, North Fork Rancheria of Mono Indians, North Fork Mono tribe, Big Sandy Rancheria of Mono Indians and Picayune Rancheria of Chukchansi Indians. There are cultural and historical sites adding providing important scientific and cultural values.

#### **Manageability**

The area has an irregular boundary that is contiguous to the existing Kaiser Wilderness on the east but adjoins a heavily developed recreation area on the south and west. The area has low manageability for preservation of wilderness character due to irregular boundary, grazing, aggressive fire suppression, adjacent private property, and motorized recreation.

#### **Summary of Potential Suitability for Inclusion in the National Wilderness Preservation System**

The area has rare plants, endangered species; old growth mixed conifer forest and is adjacent to the Kaiser Wilderness. The area also experienced grazing, which has adversely affected the appearance of naturalness of the area. The adjacent land uses toward Huntington Lake provide recreation for over 100,000 people annually. This polygon presents a limited opportunity to protect ecological groups that may be minimally represented in the National Wilderness Preservation System. Ecological groups with less than 5 percent of their national extent in the National Wilderness Preservation System comprise a low number of acres. Ecological groups with between 10 and 20 percent of their national extent in the National Wilderness Preservation System comprise 1,700 acres. (For map see Exhibit C – Sierra National Forest Evaluation Maps – Evaluation Map B.)

## **Polygon 586 (Graham Mountain)**

### **General Description**

This area includes 5,412 acres of oak woodlands in the foothills to the east of Bass Lake. This area is an important part of the scenery viewed from those recreating at Bass Lake.

National Vegetation Classification System data indicates 1 percent of the area of the polygon (50 acres) consists of ecological groups that have less than 5 percent of their national extent protected in the National Wilderness Preservation System. This polygon also contains 4 ecological groups with a total area of 3,330 acres which have less than 20 percent of their national extent protected in the National Wilderness Preservation System. The most prevalent is Mediterranean California mesic mixed conifer forest and woodland.

### **Wilderness Characteristics**

#### *Degree the Area Generally Appears to be Affected Primarily by the Forces of Nature*

The area includes past timber harvest units. It has been subject to ongoing fire suppression. The area was historically and is currently grazed. It is within the Central Camp Allotment where 101 cow-calf pairs are permitted to graze from June 1 through September 30. Development from logging, cattle grazing and fire suppression activities exist in the area.

Naturalness of vegetation is affected by past timber harvest. Non-native plants are present in openings because of proximity to roads and residences. Because of the low elevation and proximity to Bass Lake and private land, there are nonnative annual grasses present, including cheat grass. Other nonnative weeds include velvet grass, bull thistle, woolly mullein and Klamath weed.

The area is not within the natural range of variability for vegetation communities, with a very small portion affected by fire within the last 20-30 years. The area has several places with a heavy dead and down fuel component. Fire exclusion has affected species composition and succession.

Contiguous habitat for fisheries and wildlife species exist within the area. The California Department of Fish and Wildlife stock trout in adjacent waterways. There are no overall significant impacts to species populations, although relatively limited fishing and hunting occurs. Stream conditions are unknown. There are only a few meadows.

#### *Opportunities for Solitude or Primitive and Unconfined Recreation*

The area is adjacent to a busy recreational lake (almost 600,000 visitors per year) and roads, but some solitude is possible due to limited accessibility. There are no trails in the unit. Recreational opportunities include off-trail hiking, hunting, fishing and sightseeing. The area presents limited opportunities for personal challenge and self-reliance typically associated with these recreational activities due to the small size of the area and its location.

#### *Other Features of Value*

This area is culturally sensitive and is considered a special interest area from tribes in the area including: North Fork Rancheria of Mono Indians, Picayune Rancheria of Chukchansi Tribe and the North Fork Mono tribe. There are cultural and historical sites adding to the wilderness characteristics of this area by providing important scientific and cultural values.

The following species and habitats are present: potential/suitable for Yosemite toad, Sierra Nevada yellow-legged frog, and California red-legged frog (Endangered Species Act listed);

potential habitat for western pond turtle, potential habitat for foothill yellow-legged frog (Forest Service sensitive species).

### Manageability

The area is small in size and irregularly shaped and there are adjacent land uses that would make it difficult to manage the area to preserve wilderness characteristics.

### Summary of Potential Suitability for Inclusion in the National Wilderness Preservation System

The area is the foothills in background to residents and visitors of Bass Lake and is home to some endangered species. The area is currently being grazed and has a history of timber harvesting, which are factors that have contributed to degraded wilderness characteristics and the inability to manage the area to preserve or improve existing wilderness characteristics. This polygon presents a limited opportunity to protect ecological groups that may be minimally represented in the National Wilderness Preservation System. Ecological groups with less than 5 percent of their national extent in the National Wilderness Preservation System comprise a low number of acres. Ecological groups with between 10 and 20 percent of their national extent in the National Wilderness Preservation System comprise 3,300 acres. (For map see Exhibit C – Sierra National Forest Evaluation Maps – Evaluation Map A.)

## Polygon 646 (Shuteye)

### General Description

This area includes 18,013 acres along the Chiquito and Whiskey Ridges. The unit is a combination of forested slopes and granite domes. It contains the active Shuteye Lookout which is accessed by a primitive road that is also used as a motorized trail.

National Vegetation Classification System data, based on the polygon size of 18,013 acres, indicates 4 percent of the area of the polygon (653 acres) consists of ecological groups that have less than 5 percent of their national extent protected in the National Wilderness Preservation System. This polygon also contains five ecological groups with a total area of 7,765 acres which have less than 20 percent of their national extent protected in the National Wilderness Preservation System. The most prevalent is Mediterranean California mesic mixed conifer forest and woodland.

### Wilderness Characteristics

#### *Degree the Area Generally Appears to be Affected Primarily by the Forces of Nature*

Chilkoot Lake is within the unit and is part of the Pacific Gas and Electric Crane Valley project. A ditch diverts water into Chilkoot Lake and controls lake water levels. The area includes 3 historically and actively grazed cattle allotments (Central Camp, Beasore and Chiquito).

A very small portion of this unit has been affected by fire within last 20 to 30 years. The northern portion of the area is not within natural range of variability (natural range of variability is often used to describe disturbance processes, and the ecosystem variability that these disturbances create) for vegetation community. The southern portion was affected by the French Fire of 2014 with potential remnants from suppression actions including direct and indirect fire line construction, both hand and mechanical. The area has several places with a heavy dead and down fuel component due to fire suppression. This area contains the prominent ridge line of Whiskey

Ridge where there could be high potential for use in suppression actions for fire travelling into the conifer portions of the forest from the San Joaquin River/Mammoth Pool area.

The Shuteye Peak Lookout and communication sites with a cherry-stemmed access is outside the unit, however, there are motorized trails within the unit south and west of the Shuteye Peak access. Structures associated with grazing may also be present. On the northwest shore of Chilkoot Lake there is vehicle access to a popular dispersed camping area that is immediately adjacent to the unit.

The area includes old growth red fir forests and is primarily affected by natural processes. There are few meadows in the area. There is unique aquatic and emergent flora around Chilkoot Lake.

The area is mostly free of invasive weeds, with probably some bull thistle and woolly mullein present.

The area includes contiguous habitat for fisheries species and wildlife within the area. There are no overall significant current impacts to species populations, although relatively limited fishing and hunting may occur. California Department of Fish and Wildlife stock trout in adjacent waterways and may stock in lakes present in this unit.

#### *Opportunities for Solitude or Primitive and Unconfined Recreation*

Various recreational uses, the fire lookout, heavy dispersed camping and the cherry-stemmed primitive road to Shuteye Peak result in limited opportunities for solitude. Recreational opportunities include hiking, rock climbing, hunting and sightseeing. Visitors may experience risk and challenge if engaging in rock climbing, off-trail hiking and scrambling.

#### *Other Features of Value*

Rare plants present in the area are: Shuteye Peak fawn lily (*Erythronium pluriflorum*), Kellogg's lewisia (*Lewisia kelloggii* ssp. *Kelloggii*) and short-leafed hulsea (*Hulsea breviflora*) (Forest Service sensitive species).

The following species and habitats are present: potential/suitable for Yosemite toad, Sierra Nevada yellow-legged frog, and California red-legged frog (Endangered Species listed); potential and occupied habitat for western pond turtle, potential habitat for foothill yellow-legged frog (Forest Service sensitive species).

This area is culturally sensitive and is considered a special interest area from tribes in the area including North Fork Rancheria of Mono Indians and North Fork Mono tribe. There are cultural and historical sites adding to the wilderness characteristics of this area by providing important scientific and cultural values.

#### **Manageability**

The area is small in size and has motorized trails south and west of the Shuteye Peak cherry stemmed access. If the area south and west of the Shuteye Peak access was removed, it would resolve the motorized trails. There is another cherry stemmed road on the east side of the unit; with reshaping, the unit may be more manageable.

## Summary of Potential Suitability for Inclusion in the National Wilderness Preservation System

The area has rare plants, endangered species and old growth red fir forests. The area could be reshaped to exclude the primitive road accessing the lookout tower. The reshaping would reduce the adjacent motorized recreation; however, the remaining small sized unit would be reduced to approximately 10,000 acres. This polygon presents a moderate opportunity to protect ecological groups that may be minimally represented in the National Wilderness Preservation System. Ecological groups with less than 5 percent of their national extent in the National Wilderness Preservation System comprise 653 acres. Ecological groups with between 10 and 20 percent of their national extent in the National Wilderness Preservation System comprise 7,765 acres. (For map see Exhibit C – Sierra National Forest Evaluation Maps – Evaluation Map B.)

### **Polygon 688 (Chiquito Creek)**

#### General Description

This area consists of 6,515 acres of conifer forest between the Minarets and Beasore Roads. It is a northeast facing slope bounded on the south by the Sierra Vista Scenic Byway just east of Minarets Work Center.

National Vegetation Classification System data, based on the polygon size of 6,515 acres, indicates 8 percent of the area of the polygon (513 acres) consists of ecological groups that have less than 5 percent of their national extent protected in the National Wilderness Preservation System. This polygon also contains 4 ecological groups with a total area of 4,126 acres which have less than 20 percent of their national extent protected in the National Wilderness Preservation System. The most prevalent is Mediterranean California Mesic Mixed Conifer Forest and Woodland.

#### Wilderness Characteristics

##### *Degree the Area Generally Appears to be Affected Primarily by the Forces of Nature*

The area includes timber harvest units. It has been historically and is currently grazed as part of the Chiquito Allotment stocked with 158 cow-calf pair from June 1 through September 15.

The area is not within natural range of variability for vegetation communities, with a very small portion of the area affected by fire within last 20-30 years. The area has several places with a heavy dead and down fuel component. The area is probably extremely out of balance with regard to fire and fuels due to repeated fire suppression.

Development exists due to timber harvest and grazing. Road density is high surrounding the area and vehicle sounds are present.

Naturalness has been degraded by timber harvest, grazing and fire suppression. Invasive species probably include scattered bull thistle and woolly mullein, but these populations probably remain more or less stable.

The area is not within natural range of variability for vegetation communities, with a very small portion affected by fire within the last 20-30 years. The area has several places with a heavy dead and down fuel component due to fire suppression.

Contiguous habitat for fisheries and wildlife species exists within the area. It does not appear that California Department of Fish and Wildlife stock trout in this unit. However, nonnative fish may

be present in this unit. There are no overall significant impacts to species populations, although relatively limited fishing and hunting may occur. The following species and habitats are present: potential/suitable habitat and occupied habitat for Yosemite toad and Sierra Nevada yellow-legged frog (Endangered Species Act listed). There are virtually no meadows.

#### *Opportunities for Solitude or Primitive and Unconfined Recreation*

The area is next to a network of roads and fuel breaks. Road density is high surrounding this area and the sounds of traffic are common. No system trails exist in the area, but off-trail hiking and hunting are possible. Opportunities for those seeking personal challenge and self-reliance are limited due to the small size of the area.

#### *Other Features of Value*

There are no rare plants known to be in the area. There are no research natural areas or special interest areas. There are cultural and historical sites adding to the wilderness characteristics of this area by providing important scientific and cultural values.

#### **Manageability**

Manageability is severely compromised by the adjacent network of roads and fuel breaks. Road density is high surrounding this area and the sounds of vehicles are regularly present. The area is small in size, has an irregular shape and adjacent land uses that make managing the area to preserve wilderness characteristics challenging.

#### **Summary of Potential Suitability for Inclusion in the National Wilderness Preservation System**

There are endangered species in the area, however, the area is small in size, has experienced timber harvesting, grazing and fire suppression, and there are surrounding roads and regular vehicle activity. This polygon presents a limited opportunity to protect ecological groups that may be minimally represented in the National Wilderness Preservation System. Ecological groups with less than 5 percent of their national extent in the National Wilderness Preservation System comprise 513 acres. Ecological groups with between 10 and 20 percent of their national extent in the National Wilderness Preservation System comprise 4,126 acres. (For map see Exhibit C – Sierra National Forest Evaluation Maps – Evaluation Map B.)

### **Polygon 772 (Devil Gulch)**

#### **General Description**

Located south of the Merced Wild and Scenic River, the 47,748-acre Devil Gulch area is characterized by steep rugged canyon terrain. The area is bounded by Yosemite West subdivision on the northeast corner and Yosemite National Park on the east. The area is also bounded on the west by private property and Bureau of Land Management land associated with the Merced River. To the south are forest managed lands and some private property. The area is bisected by old mining roads. There is a road to the Williams Brothers Mine traveling from the Merced River south and the original Hites Cove Road accessing the Hites Cove Mine. Both of these old mining roads are outside the original inventoried roadless area. Adjacent lands also include Yosemite National Park, State Highway 140 and recreational activities associated with the Merced and South Fork of the Merced Wild and Scenic Rivers. To the south are lands managed to produce timber. Other adjacent lands are in wildland urban interface areas, the Yosemite West subdivision, Wawona and Jerseydale on Footman Ridge, as well as the infrastructure and power lines associated with people living nearby.

National Vegetation Classification System data, based on the polygon size of 47,747 acres, indicates 1 percent of the area of the polygon (264 acres) consists of ecological groups that have less than 5 percent of their national extent protected in the National Wilderness Preservation System. This polygon also contains 8 ecological groups with a total area of 33,336 acres which have less than 20 percent of their national extent protected in the National Wilderness Preservation System. The most prevalent are California lower montane blue oak-foothill pine woodland, Mediterranean California mixed oak woodland, Mediterranean California mesic mixed conifer forest and woodland, and Northern and Central California dry-mesic chaparral.

## Wilderness Characteristics

### *Degree the Area Generally Appears to be Affected Primarily by the Forces of Nature*

The area between Yosemite and the Hites Cove access tends to be affected primarily by the forces of vegetation management planned for the area. There are 2 vacant grazing allotments which are currently inactive. There are no overall significant impacts to species populations, although relatively limited fishing and hunting may occur in the area.

The area reflects few conditions associated with human impacts. The area has ecological integrity, species composition is based on the natural process and the 6 watersheds are in good hydrological condition. There have been some plantations, but the plantations are a minor influence and are not substantially noticeable. There have been no timber harvest areas or road construction within the defined area. There are no water impoundments.

The greatest indication of human impact is mining. There are at least 100 active claims in the area. The claims are visited at least annually to complete claim work. The Williams Brothers Mine has buildings in the Cold Creek area.

The area has had recent fire history in the last 12 years, as well as extensive past fire history. All cherry-stemmed roads are over 50 percent of the unit between the Hites Cove access and land managed by the Bureau of Land Management on the prominent ridgelines in the area and where fire line construction (mainly by dozers) is focused as the first areas for indirect fire suppression efforts for fire beginning in lower slopes by the Merced River and Highway 140. Because of this, past fire lines continue to be visible and are considered fuel break areas. As the main strategic locations for suppression, actions to take place prior to a fire entering the Midpines community (Ponderosa Way/Carstens and Jerseydale area) and the point where vegetation changes from mainly brush to conifer stands, these ridgelines will continue to be important for fire management.

Because of the fire history in the area between Hites Cove access and Bureau of Land Management lands, there are conifer plantations scattered throughout the area where there have been treatments completed within the plantations, as well as outside of the plantations in the form of mastication, for fire and silviculture needs. Prescribed burning has been conducted in the Gimasol and Nutmeg Gulch area. Fuel breaks on the ridgelines at Felciana, Sweetwater and Ferguson have been constructed to reduce manzanita and chamise growth and continue to be highly visible, as well as the treatments within and outside of the conifer plantations. Fires in this area have been known to travel rapidly with high intensity with little to no vegetation remaining.

Grazing has historically taken place in the area; however, grazing is not currently permitted.

There are no buildings within the area; however, on the boundary there are structures. For example, the boundary is drawn to make sure Devils Peak Lookout is outside the area. There are no airstrips or heliports; however, there are rocky peaks that could support a helicopter landing.

As stated above, there are at least 100 active mining sites in and around the proposed area. The Williams Brothers Mine dates back to 1865 and covers 80 acres adjacent to the polygon. The Hite Cove Mine along the South Fork of the Merced River was discovered in 1862. Each of these mines is outside the inventoried roadless area, but the Hite Cove Mine is partially shown within the polygon area. The historic mining sites are substantially noticeable.

It is unknown if there are any ground return telephone lines, electric lines or other linear installations. The two inholdings do not appear to have any type of access or facilities. The imprint of humans is partially noticeable relating to nonnative annual grasses in understory and presence of noxious weeds. The amount and spread of noxious weeds are being reduced as a result ongoing Forest Service projects. There is limited potential for feral species; however, no surveys have been conducted. Feral pigs may be a concern in elevations below 2,500 feet. California Department of Fish and Wildlife stock trout in adjacent water ways, and the trout may be present in this unit.

The understory in about 10 percent of the area (mostly west and south-facing slopes) is dominated by nonnative annual grasses and forbs, although native plant species richness is still high in these areas. There are noxious weeds occurring in scattered areas throughout the area including: yellow star thistle, Italian thistle, tocolote, Himalayan blackberry, bull thistle and woolly mullein. Infestations in the main Merced River Canyon along Highway 140 have been decreasing as a result of Forest Service projects.

The species composition is mostly chaparral and is out of balance due to the fire history. The area provides contiguous wildlife habitat for populations in the area. The area is bounded by the Merced Wild and Scenic River and Yosemite National Park, and connectivity is provided through these corridors. The hydrological condition is good and there are high quality water resources with the South Fork of the Merced River, Devils Gulch and Granite Creek. The soils are in good condition. There are very few meadows, if any, and they are expected to be in satisfactory condition. The air quality is impaired as it is impacted by the air quality in the San Joaquin Valley.

#### *Opportunities for Solitude or Primitive and Unconfined Recreation*

Immediately adjacent to the area are 6 recreation facilities (small campgrounds, picnic areas, a trailhead), and east, south and north are subdivisions along the edge. Opportunities for solitude are high elsewhere due to inaccessibility. The topography is steep rugged ridges and canyons, limiting access. Screening is present due to the topography, conifers in the high elevation and chaparral in the lower elevation. There is minimal evidence of civilization within the polygon. There are motorized trails present on the edges; however, use of these trails is moderate. Use of the motorized trails and the interior of the area are winter, early spring and late fall due to intense temperatures in the canyon.

A majority of the area provides quiet from motorized noise and the potential for encounters with other visitors is low. One of the highest uses in the area is the South Fork of the Merced River. Rafters access the river from Yosemite and raft to State Highway 140. There is a popular foot trail from State Highway 140 to the South Fork of the Merced River. This trail is popular in the spring to view the excellent wildflower displays.

Recreational opportunities include hiking, horseback riding, fishing, wildlife viewing, wildflower viewing, hunting and camping primarily along the South Fork Merced River Trail. Some challenge is presented by steep overgrown trails leading out of the South Fork Canyon. Off-trail travel would be especially challenging due to dense brush and steep terrain.

There are two inholdings that appear to have no motorized access or developed infrastructure to change the potential for quiet recreation.

#### *Other Features of Value*

Geologic features include caves and metamorphic rock pendants. Devil's Peak provides a great viewing point. The rare limestone salamander may be present as well as the rare plants Congdon woolly sunflower, *Congdos lewisia*, Yosemite onion, Merced *clarkia* (state listed endangered) and Mariposa *clarkia* (Forest Service sensitive species) and Tompkins sedge. There is potential habitat for western pond turtle and California red legged frog.

Other designations include the Bishop Creek National Research Area and the Devils Peak Botanical Area. These two areas would not impact wilderness designation.

There are known traditional areas used by the South Fork of the Merced MiWuk People to conduct gathering for basket weaving and tribal burial areas in the area between Yosemite and Hites Cove access. The area just west between Hites Cove access and Bureau of Land Management lands is culturally sensitive and considered a special interest area from tribes in the area, which include the American Indian Council of Mariposa (Southern Sierra Miwuk Nation) and Tuolumne Band of Miwok. There are cultural and historical sites adding to the wilderness characteristics of this area by providing important scientific and cultural values.

#### **Manageability**

The unit is not contiguous with wilderness, however, it is large enough (47,748 acres) to be moderately managed for preservation of wilderness characteristics due to the larger size if the irregular boundary and potential cherry-stemmed roads can be adequately managed.

Managing fire within the historic range of variability would be difficult. There is one main ridgeline that could stop the fire going in to Yosemite. The terrain is such that if a fire did start, high value resources like the Yosemite West community could quickly become threatened. Aggressive full suppression response would be needed within the unit to protect adjacent property. It is likely that dozers and other motorized equipment would be extensively used within the area even if it became designated wilderness.

#### **Summary of Potential Suitability for Inclusion in the National Wilderness Preservation System**

The wilderness qualities of the east side of the unit may be impacted by historic mining, adjacent land use and fire suppression. However, within the polygon the area tends to be primarily affected by the forces of nature and the area reflects few conditions associated with human impacts except mining. Although steep terrain limits access to the area, there is opportunity for primitive and unconfined recreation. There is potential to reshape the polygon along the inventoried roadless area to resolve some of the issues presented here.

The wilderness qualities of the west side of the unit may be impacted by fuel breaks along the ridges and as a result of the fire history in this area, there are conifer plantations scattered throughout where there have been treatments completed within and outside of the plantations.

However, there is a small area within the polygon primarily affected by the forces of nature. Although steep terrain limits access to the area, there is opportunity for primitive and unconfined recreation. There is potential to reshape the polygon along the inventoried roadless area to resolve some of the issues presented here.

This polygon presents an opportunity to protect ecological groups that may be minimally represented in the National Wilderness Preservation System. Ecological groups with less than 5 percent of their national extent in the national wilderness preservation system comprise 264 acres. Ecological groups with between 10 and 20 percent of their national extent in the National Wilderness Preservation System comprise an additional 33,336 acres. (For map see Exhibit C – Sierra National Forest Evaluation Maps – Evaluation Map A.)

## **Polygon 781 (Adjacent to John Muir Wilderness)**

### **General Description**

This area includes 2,477 acres of timber, granite slabs and meadows. It is located adjacent to the southern John Muir Wilderness between Courtright and Wishon Reservoirs.

National Vegetation Classification System data, based on the polygon size of 2,477 acres, indicates 21 percent of the area of the polygon (523 acres) consists of ecological groups that have less than 5 percent of their national extent protected in the National Wilderness Preservation System. This polygon also contains 5 ecological groups with a total area of 276 acres which have less than 20 percent of their national extent protected in the National Wilderness Preservation System.

### **Wilderness Characteristics**

#### *Degree the Area Generally Appears to be Affected Primarily by the Forces of Nature*

The area was historically grazed, but no commercial cattle grazing is currently permitted. The area is within vacant or closed allotments. Fire suppression is the norm. Adjacent waterways are stocked with nonnative trout. The hydrologic regime in the adjacent area is extensively manipulated by the Pacific Gas and Electric hydropower system.

The area includes the Maxson Trailhead accessing the Blackcap Trail (nonmotorized) and the Chamberlain cabin and cow camp.

There are possibly effects to vegetation communities, meadows, fens and riparian zones from trail-incision in Chamberlain Meadow, recreational grazing and stock use. No invasive species are known in the area, although some bull thistle and woolly mullein is likely present.

The area is within the natural range of variability for vegetation communities, with a very small portion affected by fire within last 20-30 years. Some portions of this area have a heavy dead and down component which could lead to higher than normal fire effects. Species composition is primarily natural, except for any areas that may have changed due to fire exclusion.

Contiguous habitat for fisheries and wildlife species exists within the area. The California Department of Fish and Wildlife stock trout in adjacent waterways. There are no overall significant impacts to species populations, although fishing and hunting occur.

### *Opportunities for Solitude or Primitive and Unconfined Recreation*

Opportunities for solitude are limited due to the presence of the popular Chamberlain Camp recreation site and the adjacent Dusy-Ershim OHV route. Jeeps and other off-road vehicles are frequently seen and heard in the area. The flat open terrain increases the likelihood of motorized trespass in the area thereby rendering it difficult to manage as wilderness.

The Blackcap Trail passes through the area. Recreational opportunities include hiking, horseback riding, camping, fishing, hunting, rock climbing and general sightseeing. Climbing the granite domes in the area may present an opportunity for personal challenge.

### *Other Features of Value*

No rare plants are known. A fen ecosystem likely exists in Chamberlain Meadow.

The following species/habitats are present: potential/suitable habitat, occupied habitat, proposed critical habitat for Yosemite toad and potential/suitable habitat for Sierra Nevada yellow-legged frog (Endangered Species Act listed).

Tribal significance is unknown, but likely.

### **Manageability**

The area is small in size. The boundary from Wishon Reservoir to Maxson Trailhead would lie in a natural stream bed. North of Maxson Trailhead the unit is bounded by the primitive road.

### **Summary of Potential Suitability for Inclusion in the National Wilderness Preservation System**

The area does not have current cattle grazing or other ground disturbing land uses. There are endangered species present and the land is adjacent to existing wilderness. Opportunities for solitude are limited due to the presence of the popular Chamberlain Camp recreation site and the adjacent Dusy-Ershim OHV route. This polygon presents a limited opportunity to protect ecological groups that may be minimally represented in the National Wilderness Preservation System. Ecological groups with less than 5 percent of their national extent in the National Wilderness Preservation System comprise 523 acres. Ecological groups with between 10 and 20 percent of their national extent in the National Wilderness Preservation System comprise 276 acres. (For map see Exhibit C – Sierra National Forest Evaluation Maps – Evaluation Map C.)

### **Polygon 785 (Florence Lake)**

#### **General Description**

This area includes 1,254 acres of timbered and open granite slopes surrounding Florence Lake (including 914 acres of surface water associated with Florence Lake) adjacent to the John Muir Wilderness.

National Vegetation Classification System data, based on the polygon size of 1,254 acres, indicates 46 percent of the area of the polygon (571 acres) consists of ecological groups that have less than 5 percent of their national extent protected in the National Wilderness Preservation System. This polygon also contains 3 ecological groups with a total area of 58 acres which have less than 20 percent of their national extent protected in the National Wilderness Preservation System.

## Wilderness Characteristics

### *Degree the Area Generally Appears to be Affected Primarily by the Forces of Nature*

The area is now closed to commercial cattle grazing. Only pack stock use occurs at Jackass Meadow under a special use permit.

The area is bordered by substantially noticeable development including Florence Lake Reservoir, the dam, boat ramps, the Florence Lake store, Jackass Meadows Campground, Florence Lake Road, High Sierra pack station, Jackass administrative site, Hooper Diversion primitive road, trailhead parking lots and day use areas. The lake allows motorized boating and a ferry under special use permit to travel the length of the lake several times a day taking people who are interested in accessing the John Muir Wilderness.

Some woolly mullein is present in disturbed areas, in addition to bull thistle likely.

The area is within the natural range of variability for vegetation communities, with a very small portion affected by fire within the last 20-30 years. Some portions of this area have a heavy dead and down component which could lead to higher than normal fire effects.

Contiguous habitat for fisheries and wildlife species exists within the area. The California Department of Fish and Wildlife stock trout in adjacent waterways. There are no overall significant impacts to species populations, although fishing and hunting occur.

Meadow and riparian condition is moderate. The south lobe of Jackass Meadow is in this unit. It has been affected by changes in hydrology from Florence Dam and historical diversions of Tombstone Creek. Overall ecological integrity is diminished by near constant disturbance from human activity. There is a restored sedge bed along Tombstone Creek in Jackass Meadow which was a 2007-2008 restoration project with Southern California Edison.

### *Opportunities for Solitude or Primitive and Unconfined Recreation*

There are minimal opportunities for solitude during the summer due to substantial adjacent development including motorized activities. Fishing is the primary nonmotorized recreational opportunity in the area. No significant opportunities for challenge and self-reliance exist in the unit.

### *Other Features of Value*

In terms of rare plants in the area, it encompasses parts of 2 populations of Mono Hot Springs evening primrose (*Camissonia sierrae* ssp. *alticola*) (Forest Service sensitive species).

The following species and habitats are present: potential/suitable habitat for Yosemite toad and potential/suitable habitat for Sierra Nevada yellow-legged frog (Endangered Species Act listed).

There are cultural and historical sites adding to the wilderness characteristics of this area by providing important scientific and cultural values.

## Manageability

This area is not manageable for preservation of wilderness characteristics due to the intensity of surrounding development, adjacent motorized activities and historic disturbance.

## Summary of Potential Suitability for Inclusion in the National Wilderness Preservation System

There are rare and nonnative plants, and aquatic endangered species and habitat. The area is reduced to 340 acres when the lake acreage is removed. A penstock bisects the area which would reduce the acreage further. This polygon presents a limited opportunity to protect ecological groups that may be minimally represented in the National Wilderness Preservation System. Ecological groups with less than 5 percent of their national extent in the National Wilderness Preservation System comprise 571 acres. Ecological groups with between 10 and 20 percent of their national extent in the National Wilderness Preservation System comprise 58 acres. (For map see Exhibit C – Sierra National Forest Evaluation Maps – Evaluation Map B.)

### **Polygon 795 (Adjacent to John Muir Wilderness)**

#### General Description

This area includes 1,206 acres of forested slopes and granite slabs south of the Florence Lake Road and the Ward Tunnel, a hydroelectric penstock.

National Vegetation Classification System data indicates 9 percent of the area of the polygon (111 acres) consists of ecological groups that have less than 5 percent of their national extent protected in the National Wilderness Preservation System. This polygon also contains 4 ecological groups with a total area of 89 acres which have less than 20 percent of their national extent protected in the National Wilderness Preservation System.

#### Wilderness Characteristics

##### *Degree the Area Generally Appears to be Affected Primarily by the Forces of Nature*

Fire suppression is the norm in this area. The area was historically grazed, but the Hot Springs Allotment is not currently active.

The area is surrounded on 3 sides by the Kaiser Pass Road, Florence Lake Road and the Ward Tunnel. There is likely development associated with Southern California Edison projects adjacent to the area. The Kaiser Pass Road is the only access from the end of State Highway 168 to Florence and Edison Reservoirs. This road is heavily used causing noise to travel across the narrow unit.

No invasive species populations are known, but there is possibly bull thistle and mullein associated with the road and the Southern California Edison aqueduct right-of-way.

The area is within the natural range of variability for vegetation communities, with a very small portion affected by fire within last 20-30 years. Some portions of this area have a heavy dead and down wood component which could lead to higher than normal fire effects.

Contiguous habitat for fisheries and wildlife species exists within the area. The California Department of Fish and Wildlife stock trout in adjacent waterways. There are no overall significant impacts to species populations, although fishing and hunting occur. There is little to no riparian and meadow habitat.

##### *Opportunities for Solitude or Primitive and Unconfined Recreation*

Motorized traffic is audible and, in some places, visible from this area; however, the John Muir Wilderness is also bounded by Kaiser Pass Road and Florence Lake Road here and east of this

area. There are no official trails in the unit. There are no significant opportunities for visitors to seek challenge or self-reliance in the area. The unit is contiguous to the John Muir Wilderness,

#### *Other Features of Value*

This area is culturally sensitive and is considered a special interest area from tribes in the area including North Fork Rancheria of Mono Indians, North Fork Mono tribe, Big Sandy Rancheria of Mono Indians, Picayune Rancheria of Chukchansi Indians, Cold Springs Rancheria of Mono Indians, Dunlap Band of Mono Indians, Bishop Paiute Tribe, Big Pine Paiute Tribe and Native American Organizations like the Mono Nation.

The following species and habitats are present: potential/suitable habitat, occupied habitat for Yosemite toad and potential/suitable habitat for Sierra Nevada yellow-legged frog (Endangered Species Act listed).

#### **Manageability**

The unit may be manageable for preservation of wilderness characteristics due to its small size and that it is contiguous to the John Muir Wilderness. The John Muir Wilderness is bounded by the Kaiser Pass Road and Florence Lake Road at other locations. Therefore there would be manageable boundaries.

#### **Summary of Potential Suitability for Inclusion in the National Wilderness Preservation System**

The area has nonnative plants and is surrounded by roads and a penstock on 3 sides. However, the area is consistent with other boundaries of the John Muir Wilderness where it is near roads and penstocks and therefore would be suitable for inclusion in the National Wilderness Preservation System.

This polygon does not present an opportunity to protect ecological groups that may be minimally represented in the National Wilderness Preservation System. Ecological groups with less than 5 percent of their national extent in the National Wilderness Preservation System comprise 111 acres. Ecological groups with between 10 and 20 percent of their national extent in the National Wilderness Preservation System comprise 89 acres. (For map see Exhibit C – Sierra National Forest Evaluation Maps – Evaluation Map B.)

### **Polygon 797 (Adjacent to John Muir Wilderness)**

#### **General Description**

This area includes 1,299 acres of steep forested slopes to the south of the Kaiser Pass road east of the pass. It is contiguous with the John Muir Wilderness.

National Vegetation Classification System data indicates none of the polygon consists of ecological groups that have less than 5 percent of their national extent protected in the National Wilderness Preservation System. This polygon also contains 3 ecological groups with a total area of 20 acres which have less than 20 percent of their national extent protected in the National Wilderness Preservation System.

## Wilderness Characteristics

### *Degree the Area Generally Appears to be Affected Primarily by the Forces of Nature*

The area is within a vacant cattle allotment. A part of the area near Portal Forebay is used to hold cattle overnight as they are being driven to the Mono and Cassidy Allotments near Edison.

Fire suppression is the norm in this area.

The area is bordered on 3 sides by roads, power lines, the Ward Tunnel and developed recreation sites. The Corbett Lake trail crosses this unit. This narrow unit would allow visitors to see the roads, power lines and developed recreation sites. The Corbett Lake trail (nonmotorized) crosses this unit

No invasive species populations are known, but there is possibly bull thistle and mullein associated with the road and the Southern California Edison aqueduct right of way.

The area is within natural range of variability for vegetation communities, with a very small portion affected by fire within last 20-30 years. Some portions of this area have a heavy dead and down component which could lead to higher than normal fire effects.

Contiguous habitat for fisheries and wildlife species exists within the area. The California Department of Fish and Wildlife stock trout in waterways. There are no overall significant impacts to species populations, although fishing and hunting occur. Stream conditions are probably good in Bolsillo, East Fork Camp and Camp 62 Creeks.

### *Opportunities for Solitude or Primitive and Unconfined Recreation*

Motorized traffic is audible and, in some places, visible from this area. There is one hiking/equestrian trail leading to Corbett Lake. There are minimal opportunities for visitors to seek challenge and self-reliance in this area.

### *Other Features of Value*

This area is culturally sensitive and is considered a special interest area from tribes in the area, including: North Fork Rancheria of Mono Indians, North Fork Mono Tribe, Big Sandy Rancheria of Mono Indians, Picayune Rancheria of Chukchansi Indians, Cold Springs Rancheria of Mono Indians, Dunlap Band of Mono Indians, Bishop Paiute Tribe, Big Pine Paiute Tribe and Native American organizations like the Mono Nation.

The following species/habitats are present: Potential/suitable habitat, occupied habitat, proposed critical habitat for Yosemite toad and Potential/suitable habitat for Sierra Nevada yellow-legged frog (Endangered Species listed).

## Manageability

The unit is small and bounded by Kaiser Pass Road and the Ward Tunnel penstock. The boundaries of the area are manageable similar to the John Muir Wilderness east of this unit.

## Summary of Potential Suitability for Inclusion in the National Wilderness Preservation System

The area has endangered species and habitat and is adjacent to existing wilderness. The area has nonnative plants and is surrounded by a road and a penstock on three sides. However, the area is consistent with other boundaries of the John Muir Wilderness where it is near roads and

penstocks and therefore would be suitable for inclusion in the National Wilderness Preservation System. This polygon does not present an opportunity to protect ecological groups that may be minimally represented in the National Wilderness Preservation System. Ecological groups with less than 5 percent of their national extent in the National Wilderness Preservation System comprise none of the area. Ecological groups with between 10 and 20 percent of their national extent in the National Wilderness Preservation System comprise 20 acres. (For map see Exhibit C – Sierra National Forest Evaluation Maps – Evaluation Map B.)

## **Polygon 815 (Edison Lake)**

### **General Description**

This area includes 3,887 acres in the vicinity of Lake Edison. The acreage includes 1,818 acres of surface water for Lake Edison.

National Vegetation Classification System data indicates 12 percent of the area of the polygon (484 acres) consists of ecological groups that have less than 5 percent of their national extent protected in the National Wilderness Preservation System. There is less than 100 acres comprised of ecological groups that have less than 20 percent of their national extent protected in the National Wilderness Preservation System.

### **Wilderness Characteristics**

#### *Degree the Area Generally Appears to be Affected Primarily by the Forces of Nature*

Fire suppression, grazing and fish stocking are present at Lake Edison. The area is within an active allotment (Mono Allotment) that is currently grazed with 100 cow-calf pair from July through September.

The area is adjacent to substantially noticeable development including Lake Edison, developed recreation sites and roads. The lake allows motorized boating and a ferry under special use permit that travels the length of the lake several times a day taking people who are interested in accessing the John Muir Wilderness. Development associated with grazing may be present within the unit.

No invasive plant populations are known, but possibly include cheat grass, bull thistle, and woolly mullein.

The area is within natural range of variability for vegetation communities, with a very small portion affected by fire within last 20-30 years. Some portions of this area have a heavy dead and down component which could lead to higher than normal fire effects.

Contiguous habitat for fisheries and wildlife species exists within the area. The California Department of Fish and Wildlife stock trout in reservoirs and waterways. There are no overall significant impacts to species populations, although fishing and hunting occur.

There are a few meadows toward the north of the unit, one looks very dry and the other may be a fen. Mostly the area is dry.

#### *Opportunities for Solitude or Primitive and Unconfined Recreation*

Outstanding opportunities for solitude are very low during the summer due to extensive adjacent development including Vermillion Valley Resort, Lake Edison, High Sierra Pack Station and Onion Springs primitive road bisecting a section of the area. Hiking and riding trails pass through

this area to access the Ansel Adams Wilderness. There are no significant opportunities for visitors to seek challenge and risk in this unit.

The lake allows motorized boating and a ferry under special use permit that travels the length of the lake several times a day taking people who are interested in accessing the John Muir Wilderness. Development associated with grazing may be present within the unit.

#### *Other Features of Value*

This area is culturally sensitive and is considered a special interest area from tribes in the area including: North Fork Rancheria of Mono Indians, North Fork Mono Tribe, Big Sandy Rancheria of Mono Indians, Picayune Rancheria of Chukchansi Indians, Cold Springs Rancheria of Mono Indians, Dunlap Band of Mono Indians, Bishop Paiute Tribe, Big Pine Paiute Tribe and Native American organizations like the Mono Nation. There are cultural and historical sites adding to the wilderness characteristics of this area by providing important scientific and cultural values.

The following species and habitats are present: potential/suitable habitat, occupied habitat, proposed critical habitat for Yosemite toad and potential/suitable habitat, proposed critical habitat for Sierra Nevada yellow-legged frog (Endangered Species Act listed).

No rare plants are known to occur. There is a meadow that may contain a fen.

#### **Manageability**

This area is small in size which is reduced to 2,069 acres when Lake Edison is removed. There is potential wilderness around the lake and the remaining acreage minus the Onion Springs primitive road. The boundaries of the shore line and the roads are manageable.

#### **Summary of Potential Suitability for Inclusion in the National Wilderness Preservation System**

The area has endangered species and/or habitat. The area has development along the edge of the type that supports people who use the wilderness. This polygon does not present an opportunity to protect ecological groups that may be minimally represented in the National Wilderness Preservation System. Ecological groups with less than 5 percent of their national extent in the National Wilderness Preservation System comprise a low number of acres. Ecological groups with between 10 and 20 percent of their national extent in the National Wilderness Preservation System comprise less than 100 acres. (For map see Exhibit C – Sierra National Forest Evaluation Maps – Evaluation Map B.)

### **Polygon 819 (San Joaquin River – Adjacent to Ansel Adams Wilderness)**

#### **General Description**

This area includes 37,529 acres consisting of steep timber and brush slopes around the San Joaquin River Canyon and the timbered area between the eastern Kaiser Wilderness and the southern Ansel Adams Wilderness. The unit is bounded by a penstock on the west and Stump Springs road on the east. On the south boundary are power lines and the town of Big Creek. On the north is National Forest System land, including the Ansel Adams Wilderness. The area is bisected by the San Joaquin River including Mammoth Pool Reservoir. The acreage includes 1,017 acres of surface water for Mammoth Pool Reservoir.

National Vegetation Classification System data, based on the polygon size of 37,528 acres, indicates 6 percent of the area of the polygon (2,065 acres) consists of ecological groups that have less than 5 percent of their national extent protected in the National Wilderness Preservation System. The most prevalent is Inter-Mountain Basin big sagebrush shrubland. This polygon also contains 8 ecological groups with a total area of 22,370 acres which have less than 20 percent of their national extent protected in the National Wilderness Preservation System. The most prevalent are California lower montane blue oak-foothill pine woodland, Mediterranean California mixed oak woodland, Mediterranean California mesic mixed conifer forest and woodland, Great Basin juniper woodland, and Northern and Central California dry-mesic chaparral.

### Wilderness Characteristics

#### *Degree the Area Generally Appears to be Affected Primarily by the Forces of Nature*

Intentional manipulations include water impoundment and hydropower infrastructure, timber harvest, fire exclusion, cattle grazing and fish stocking. The area covers several active cattle allotments where grazing occurs June through September.

The area likely contains some scattered bull thistle, woolly mullein and velvet grass, but no documented weed infestations. The northern portion of area is not within the natural range of variability for vegetation community. The southern portion of area was affected by the 2014 French Fire and the 2013 Aspen Fire with remnants of suppression actions including direct and indirect fire line construction by dozers and hand crews. The area has several places with a heavy dead and down fuel component.

Contiguous habitat for fisheries and wildlife species exists within the area. The California Department of Fish and Wildlife stock trout in reservoirs and waterways. There are no overall significant impacts to species populations, although relatively limited fishing and hunting occurs. There are only a few meadows.

#### *Opportunities for Solitude or Primitive and Unconfined Recreation*

Opportunities for solitude are limited in the area around Mammoth Pool. Much of the northern section surrounds Mammoth Pool and is what people see when recreating at the reservoir. Major hydropower infrastructure is visible from a portion of the area in the San Joaquin River Canyon. Extensive fire suppression impacts are also visible from this area. Primitive recreation is limited to hiking or riding on a few infrequently maintained trails. The area does not present significant opportunities for challenge and self-reliance, other than hiking on steep terrain.

Downstream from the hydropower infrastructure is a popular noncommercial river rafting area. There are groups that watch the hydroelectric web sites for downstream water releases. Those weekends when the releases occur, upwards of 100 people come out to raft the river.

#### *Other Features of Value*

This area is culturally sensitive and is considered a special interest area from tribes in the area including: North Fork Rancheria of Mono Indians, North Fork Mono Tribe, Big Sandy Rancheria of Mono Indians and Picayune Rancheria of Chukchansi Indians. There are cultural and historical sites adding to the wilderness characteristics of this area by providing important scientific and cultural values.

The following species and habitats are present: potential/suitable for Yosemite toad and Sierra Nevada yellow-legged frog (Endangered Species Act listed); potential habitat for western pond turtle, potential habitat for foothill yellow-legged frog (Forest Service sensitive species).

### Manageability

Part of the area has potential to be managed for preservation of wilderness character in the portion providing connectivity between Ansel Adams and Kaiser Wildernesses, defined on the north by Crater Lake Meadow and on the south by Kaiser Pass Road with limited accessibility. Other portions have a need to reshape to change the irregular shape to one that is manageable and to remove the reservoir and hydropower infrastructure, existing dozer lines and the need for full-suppression fire response due to risk to nearby communities.

### Summary of Potential Suitability for Inclusion in the National Wilderness Preservation System

A section of the river canyon in this unit is unmanageable as wilderness. Wilderness characteristics are significantly compromised by surrounding development and extensive fire suppression impacts. These effects cannot be mitigated and are likely to continue into the foreseeable future to protect nearby communities. A majority of the river canyon is still in a natural condition and is used for noncommercial river rafting.

The portion of the area between the Kaiser and Ansel Adams Wildernesses has wilderness characteristics due to the connection it provides between the two wildernesses. However, it is still subject to fire suppression effects, grazing and adjacent motorized activities.

This polygon presents an opportunity to protect ecological groups that may be minimally represented in the National Wilderness Preservation System. Ecological groups with less than 5 percent of their national extent in the National Wilderness Preservation System comprise 2,065 acres. Ecological groups with between 10 and 20 percent of their national extent in the National Wilderness Preservation System comprise an additional 22,370 acres. (For map see Exhibit C – Sierra National Forest Evaluation Maps – Evaluation Map B.)

## **Polygon 820 (Piyau Dome – Adjacent to Ansel Adams Wilderness)**

### General Description

This area consists of 1,741 acres of conifer forest in the vicinity of Piyau Dome adjacent to the Ansel Adams Wilderness and is long and narrow.

National Vegetation Classification System data indicates 15 percent of the area of the polygon (260 acres) consists of ecological groups that have less than 5 percent of their national extent protected in the National Wilderness Preservation System. This polygon also contains 5 ecological groups with a total area of 709 acres which have less than 20 percent of their national extent protected in the National Wilderness Preservation System.

### Wilderness Characteristics

#### *Degree the Area Generally Appears to be Affected Primarily by the Forces of Nature*

Past timber harvest is still visible and grazing is ongoing. The plant communities are predominantly native and unimpacted by current activities. Fire suppression is the standard practice in this area.

Timber harvest has occurred in the area. The area is next to a network of roads including trailhead access. The area is currently grazed as part of South Jackass Allotment with 116 cow-calf pair permitted from June 16 through September 3.

Invasive species include scattered bull thistle and woolly mullein. These populations are more or less stable. The area is within the natural range of variability for vegetation community, with a very small portion affected by fire within last 20-30 years.

There are no known overall significant impacts to species populations, although relatively limited fishing occurs. It does not appear that California Department of Fish and Wildlife stock trout in adjacent waterways. However, nonnative fish may be present in this unit. Feral pigs may be a concern for elevations below 2,500 feet elevation.

Contiguous habitat for fisheries and wildlife species exists within the area. The following species or habitats are present: potential/suitable habitat for Yosemite toad and potential/suitable habitat for Sierra Nevada yellow-legged frog (Endangered Species Act listed). No species overpopulation issues are known. Meadow and riparian conditions are probably good, but there is very little in this unit.

#### *Opportunities for Solitude or Primitive and Unconfined Recreation*

There is an adjacent road system along the edges, a history of timber harvesting, and existing grazing. The area is adjacent to the Ansel Adams Wilderness with a trailhead accessing Forest Service Road 26E38 which is the Miller Creek Trail that starts at the Minarets Pack Station and then ties to Cassidy Trailhead at Forest Service Road 5S84. Cassidy Meadow Trail (26E23) is the trail that goes from Miller's Crossing trail (26E63) to California Riding and Hiking Trail.

#### *Other Features of Value*

There is one known population of Yosemite *lewisia* on Piyah (Squaw) Dome. There are no research natural areas or other special interest areas.

This area is culturally sensitive and is considered a special interest area from tribes in the area including: North Fork Rancheria of Mono Indians and North Fork Mono tribe. There are cultural and historical sites adding to the wilderness characteristics of this area by providing important scientific and cultural values.

#### **Manageability**

Past timber harvest is still visible and grazing is ongoing. The area is bounded by a scenic byway on the east and a road on the north that accesses a trailhead providing wilderness access. The small size is not an issue as it is adjacent to the Ansel Adam Wilderness. The boundary toward the scenic byway may not be well-defined topographically.

#### **Summary of Potential Suitability for Inclusion in the National Wilderness Preservation System**

The area has a rare plant and the plant communities are predominantly native and not impacted by current activities. The area has potential for inclusion in the National Wilderness Preservation System with mitigation of current land management activities. This polygon presents a limited opportunity to protect ecological groups that may be minimally represented in the National Wilderness Preservation System. Ecological groups with less than 5 percent of their national extent in the National Wilderness Preservation System comprise a low number of acres. Ecological groups with between 10 and 20 percent of their national extent in the National

Wilderness Preservation System comprise 709 acres. (For map see Exhibit C – Sierra National Forest Evaluation Maps – Evaluation Map B.)

## **Polygon 821 (Mount Raymond)**

### **General Description**

Located south of Yosemite National Park, this 13,370 acre area is partially divided by private property, the Red Top motorized trail and other forest roads. The area is characterized by timbered slopes dropping to the South Fork of the Merced River on the west and the lower slopes of Red Top and Madera Peaks to the east.

National Vegetation Classification System data indicates less than 1 percent of the area of the polygon consists of ecological groups that have less than 5 percent of their national extent protected in the National Wilderness Preservation System. This polygon also contains 5 ecological groups with a total area of 2,082 acres which have less than 20 percent of their national extent protected in the National Wilderness Preservation System. The most prevalent is Mediterranean California Mesic Mixed Conifer Forest and Woodland.

### **Wilderness Characteristics**

#### *Degree the Area Generally Appears to be Affected Primarily by the Forces of Nature*

The area is affected mostly by natural processes with some grazing impacts in riparian areas and meadows. The area is subject to ongoing fire suppression and cattle grazing.

The Star Lakes motorized trail was originally constructed to access the Star Mine. The Star Mine, also called the Yellow Jacket Mine, is a tungsten mine that began in 1946. There is and private property with road access on the edges of the area.

The area was grazed historically and is currently part of two active allotments (Iron Creek and Mugler allotments). The allotments are currently grazed with 160 and 209 cow-calf pair, respectively, from June 15 through September 30.

There are some impacts to plant communities from stock use, but they are not significant. The area is largely free of invasive nonnative plants. There are scattered patches of bull thistle and woolly mullein. The area is within the natural range of variability for vegetation community, with only small portion affected by fire within the last 20 years, mainly lightning-caused fires.

There are conifer stands in steep, rocky terrain with a heavy dead and down fuel component. This fuel loading is continuous enough to allow a “path” for a fire to travel from the Sierra National Forest to Yosemite National Park with a moderate potential to affect the community of Wawona. Fires here mainly travel by rolling material, with subsequent upslope runs. Heavy fuels allow for greater distance spotting potential.

There are no overall significant impacts to terrestrial and aquatic species populations, although relatively limited fishing and hunting may occur. Feral pigs may be a concern for elevations below 2,500 feet in elevation. California Department of Fish and Wildlife stock trout in adjacent waterways and in lakes present in this unit. Contiguous habitat for fisheries and wildlife species exist within the area.

Meadow and riparian conditions are probably mostly good, although some areas have grazing and trampling impacts from livestock.

The following species/habitats are present: potential/suitable habitat, occupied habitat, proposed critical habitat for Yosemite toad and potential/suitable habitat for Sierra Nevada yellow-legged frog (Endangered Species Act listed).

#### *Opportunities for Solitude or Primitive and Unconfined Recreation*

There is private property on the east with an access road. The Star Lakes and the Red Top motorized trails may be impacting solitude in the surrounding area. Opportunities for solitude are generally high elsewhere due to inaccessibility. Recreational opportunities include hiking, horseback riding, fishing, hunting, camping and sightseeing. The area presents opportunities for personal challenge and self-reliance typically associated with these recreational activities.

#### *Other Features of Value*

There are several meadows with fens (peat lands) present. No rare plants known. There are no research natural areas or botanical special interest areas present.

This area is culturally sensitive and is considered a special interest area from tribes in the area including: the American Indian Council of Mariposa (Southern Sierra Miwuk Nation), North Fork Rancheria of Mono Indians and North Fork Mono Tribe.

There are several large lakes and meadows and rich old-growth forests of pine and fir. Six trails cross through the area and access Yosemite National Park.

#### **Manageability**

The area would need to be reshaped to remove the motorized trails from the within boundaries. The area would be very manageable as wilderness with the boundary of the South Fork of the Merced Wild and Scenic River to serve as an anchor for this wilderness.

#### **Summary of Potential Suitability for Inclusion in the National Wilderness Preservation System**

Once the area is reshaped, the remaining area is affected mostly by natural processes with some grazing impacts in riparian areas and meadows. The naturalness, undeveloped quality and opportunities for solitude are generally intact allowing for potential for inclusion in the National Wilderness Preservation System. This polygon presents a limited opportunity to protect ecological groups that may be minimally represented in the National Wilderness Preservation System. Ecological groups with less than 5 percent of their national extent in the National Wilderness Preservation System comprise a low number of acres. Ecological groups with between 10 and 20 percent of their national extent in the National Wilderness Preservation System comprise 2,082 acres. (For map see Exhibit C – Sierra National Forest Evaluation Maps – Evaluation Map A and Evaluation Map B.)

### **Polygon 822 (Adjacent to Ansel Adams Wilderness)**

#### **General Description**

Located south adjacent to the Ansel Adams Wilderness, this 10,582 acre unit creates a horseshoe shape with Clover Meadow in the center. There are 2 motorized trails at the edge of the established wilderness boundary for 4.2 miles on either side of the Mammoth Trailhead.

National Vegetation Classification System data indicates 3 percent of the area of the polygon (367 acres) consists of ecological groups that have less than 5 percent of their national extent protected

in the National Wilderness Preservation System. This polygon also contains 5 ecological groups with a total area of 1,324 acres which have less than 20 percent of their national extent protected in the National Wilderness Preservation System. The most prevalent is Mediterranean California mesic mixed conifer forest and woodland.

### Wilderness Characteristics

#### *Degree the Area Generally Appears to be Affected Primarily by the Forces of Nature*

The area is affected mostly by natural processes with past and current grazing impacts in riparian areas and meadows.

The area has no significant developments. It is adjacent to the Green Mountain and Cattle Mountain motorized trails. In the area are 3 campgrounds, 4 trailheads, 2 vista points along the scenic byway and 1 corral. A majority of these developments support access to the wilderness.

This area was grazed historically and is currently part of 2 active allotments (Iron Creek and Mugler). There is some impact to plant communities from stock use, but not significant. The area is largely free of invasive nonnative plants. There are scattered patches of bull thistle and woolly mullein. The area is within the natural range of variability for vegetation community, with only a small portion affected by fire within the last 20 years, mainly lightning-caused fires. Plant communities are largely unaffected by human impacts. The area is primarily granitic rock and open gravelly and sandy areas associated with rocky areas. These areas are not generally characterized by high fuel loads as a result of fire suppression (because of low productivity) and have not been subject to much management. A few patches of bull thistle occur along Beasore Road, and no other invasive plants are known to occur within the unit.

Conifer stands are located in steep, rocky terrain with a heavy dead and down fuel component. This fuel loading is continuous enough to allow a “path” for a fire to travel from Forest Service to National Park Service with a moderate potential to affect the community of Wawona. Fires here mainly travel by rolling material, with subsequent upslope runs. Heavy fuels allow for greater distance spotting potential.

No overall significant impacts to terrestrial and aquatic species populations, although relatively limited fishing and hunting may occur. California Department of Fish and Wildlife stock trout in adjacent waterways and in lakes present in this unit. Contiguous habitat for fisheries and wildlife species exist within the area. Meadow and riparian conditions are probably mostly good though some areas have grazing and trampling impacts from livestock.

The following species and habitats are present: potential/suitable habitat, occupied habitat, proposed critical habitat for Yosemite toad and potential/suitable habitat for Sierra Nevada yellow-legged frog (Endangered Species Act listed).

#### *Opportunities for Solitude or Primitive and Unconfined Recreation*

There is private property near the northern section with a cherry-stemmed road heading further north to access the Hole Trail that ties to a trail to access Yosemite. The private property has had past discussions regarding new development. There is a section of the area that is adjacent to the Green Mountain and Cattle Mountain motorized trails. An area near Cattle Mountain would have a corridor between the current Ansel Adams Wilderness and this unit similar to corridors currently in the Dinkey Lakes Wilderness.

Overall there are opportunities for solitude due to inaccessibility. Recreational opportunities include hiking, horseback riding, fishing, hunting, camping and sightseeing. The area presents opportunities for personal challenge and self-reliance typically associated with these recreational activities.

#### *Other Features of Value*

There are several meadows with fens (peat lands) present. No rare plants known. There are no research natural areas or botanical special interest areas.

This area is culturally sensitive and is considered a special interest area from tribes in the area including: the American Indian Council of Mariposa (Southern Sierra Miwuk Nation), North Fork Rancheria of Mono Indians and North Fork Mono Tribe. There are cultural and historical sites adding to the wilderness characteristics of this area by providing important scientific and cultural values.

There are several large lakes and meadows and rich old-growth forests of pine and fir. Six trails cross through the area and access Yosemite National Park. The vistas from Cattle Mountain and Green Mountain are excellent.

#### **Manageability**

The area is part of two active allotments (Iron Creek and Mugler) and is currently grazed with 160 and 209 cow-calf pair, respectively from June 15 through September 30.

The area would be manageable for preservation of wilderness characteristics due to its connection to the Ansel Adams Wilderness and is bounded by a road system. The area would have to be reshaped to remove 2 motorized trails from the unit.

#### **Summary of Potential Suitability for Inclusion in the National Wilderness Preservation System**

The area has low suitability due to manageability issues, existing grazing, size, adjacent motorized access, fire suppression and fish stocking. Naturalness, undeveloped quality and opportunities for solitude are generally intact. The area has great vistas, access to lakes, existing trails and endangered species and habitat. Once the area is reshaped to remove existing motorized trails, it is suitable for inclusion in the National Wilderness Preservation System. This polygon presents a limited opportunity to protect ecological groups that may be minimally represented in the National Wilderness Preservation System. Ecological groups with less than 5 percent of their national extent in the National Wilderness Preservation System comprise a low number of acres. Ecological groups with between 10 and 20 percent of their national extent in the National Wilderness Preservation System comprise 1,324 acres. (For map see Exhibit C – Sierra National Forest Evaluation Maps – Evaluation Map B.)

### **Polygon 1378 (Adjacent to John Muir and Monarch Wildernesses)**

#### **General Description**

This 71,974 acre area is bounded on the north by Rogers Ridge, on the east by Deer Ridge bounded by the Monarch Wilderness, on the south by a network of cherry stemmed roads in the Sequoia National Monument, and on the west by the boundary of the Kings River Special Management Area and the Sequoia National Monument western boundaries. There are roads and motorized trails providing corridors within the unit. The area includes the 49,000-acre Kings

River Special Management Area and an area in the northern portion of the Sequoia National Monument from Converse Basin to McKenzie Ridge.

Overall vegetation includes steep slopes of brush and wooded slopes, rising steeply out of the river canyons with vegetation transitions from chaparral through oak-conifer to mixed conifers at higher elevations. National Vegetation Classification System data, based on the polygon size of 71,974 acres, indicates 1 percent of the area of the polygon (670 acres) consists of ecological groups that have less than 5 percent of their national extent protected in the National Wilderness Preservation System. This polygon also contains 8 ecological groups with a total area of 22,425 acres which have less than 20 percent of their national extent protected in the National Wilderness Preservation System. The most prevalent are California Central Valley mixed oak savanna, California lower montane blue oak-foothill pine woodland, Mediterranean California mixed oak woodland, Mediterranean California mesic mixed conifer forest and woodland and Northern and Central California dry-mesic chaparral.

### Wilderness Characteristics

#### *Degree the Area Generally Appears to be Affected Primarily by the Forces of Nature*

The area north of the Spanish Lakes motorized trail is within the Collins Allotment which is currently grazed by 130 cow-calf pair from June through September. The area between the Spanish motorized trail and the Kings River was grazed historically, but is not currently within any active allotments. The area south of the Kings River has three grazing allotments: Sampson with up to 200 cow-calf pair, Hoist with 100 cow-calf pair, and Converse with up to 125 cow-calf pair.

The entire area has a natural fire regime which has shaped the vegetation. The existing vegetation community across the unit would not appear inappropriate to a casual recreational visitor. The area includes nonnative plants in the understory, such as annual grasses and forbs from Europe, especially in open areas. The area is within the natural range of variability for vegetation communities, with a very small portion affected by fire within the last 20-30 years. Some portions of this area have a heavy dead and down component which could lead to higher than normal fire effects. Steep and rocky river canyons may also lead to rapid fire spread and high intensity fire effects. Fires in this area have the potential to become large and will likely be aggressively suppressed. Portions of this watershed are typically soil-based rather than rock-based, and often experience intense winter rain storms. Following a fire, it is anticipated that extreme sediment loads will be experienced in the downstream water ways.

The area within the Converse Basin to McKenzie Ridge and outside of the Kings River Special Management Area was considerably modified by historic logging from the mid-1800s to early 1900s. Most of the Giant sequoias were removed during this time and the area has many plantations. Many of the old logging roads have been incorporated into a system for motorized routes for off highway vehicles. There are several popular interpretive sites.

The overall character of the area appears natural and has ecological integrity despite the impacts from recreation use, developments and historic logging. Large blocks of the unit are unaffected by human activity and the steep terrain limits access. Much of the area is rarely visited and existing trails are overgrown with brush. There are major developments in the unit. There are communications sites, and range improvements such as fences, corrals and water troughs occur near some water sources in the area. Several historic guard cabins are present. There is one storage building under special use permit, and trailheads and campgrounds are in the area and concentrated along the Kings River. There are several interpretive sites and trailheads in the area

outside of the Kings River Special Management Area. Motorized and hiking trails are present in the area. There are several motorized trails including the Spanish and several motorized trails in the Kings River Special Management Area south of the Kings River, and a system of motorized routes in the area outside of the Kings River Special Management Area.

*Opportunities for Solitude or Primitive and Unconfined Recreation*

Given the steepness of the topography there is minimal recreational use on the steeper slopes. The area has high opportunities for solitude due to its large size, although any public use is focused on the few existing trails and the Kings River. Developed and dispersed recreation activities include hiking, horseback riding, rafting, kayaking, hunting, camping and sightseeing.

The area south of the Kings River and outside of the Kings River Special Management Area has little opportunity for solitude because of high visitor volume created from the close proximity to popular national parks and objects of interest in the Monument, and off highway vehicle use in this area. Primitive opportunities are intermixed with more developed recreation opportunities with motorized access.

Some private property exists at the edges of the unit. Potential encounters with other visitors are low throughout most of the area. Use is primarily confined to trails within the area, with concentrations of use along roads at the boundaries or cherry-stems. There are opportunities for challenge and self-reliance in this area along the Kings River and travelling off-trail through steep rugged terrain.

In times of active fire suppression activity the number of helicopters coming and going out of the nearby heliport could be disruptive to visitors. Conversely, the inclusion of this unit into the wilderness system would protect the audible qualities of large areas away from these roads. There are two small communities and some private property at the edge of the unit.

The area includes the congressionally designated Kings River Special Management Area and the Kings Wild and Scenic River. Native species have connectivity and habitat in the areas away from human impacts. All of the area south of the Kings River is also in the Giant Sequoia National Monument.

There is a rare plant, the Kings River buckwheat (*Eriogonum nudum* var. *regirivum*) on limestone and marble outcrops (Forest Service sensitive species). Some meadows north of the Spanish off highway vehicle route may have fen ecosystems.

The following species and habitats are present: potential/suitable habitat, occupied habitat and proposed critical habitat for Yosemite toad, potential/suitable habitat for Sierra Nevada yellow-legged frog, and California red-legged frog (Endangered Species Act listed); potential/suitable habitat and occupied habitat for western pond turtle, potential habitat for foothill yellow-legged frog (Forest Service sensitive species).

This area is culturally sensitive and is considered a special interest area from tribes in the area including: Cold Springs Rancheria of Mono Indians, Big Sandy Rancheria of Mono Indians, Dunlap Band of Mono Indians and Tule River Indian Reservation and the Haslett Basin Traditional Committee (Holkoma Mono).

The area was noted for its significant old-growth forest in the Sierra Nevada Ecosystem Project Report.

## Manageability

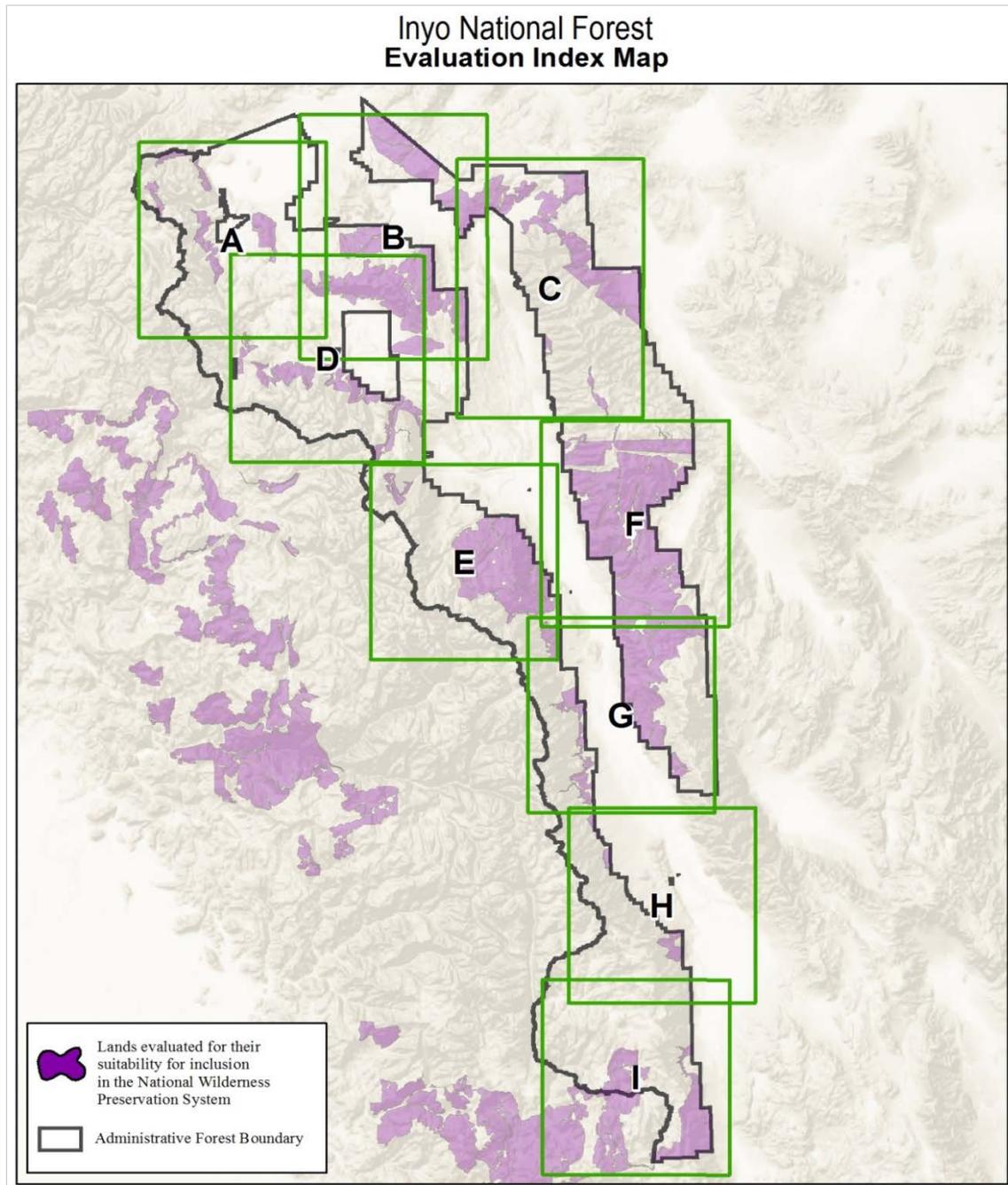
Much of the area is manageable for preservation of wilderness characteristics due to its larger size and rugged terrain. Reshaping the area to avoid motorized trails within the unit and cherry-stemmed roads would be necessary.

## Summary of Potential Suitability for Inclusion in the National Wilderness Preservation System

A portion of the area might be suitable for inclusion in the National Wilderness Preservation System due to relatively intact wilderness qualities and rugged terrain limiting access. Large blocks of the unit are unaffected by human activity. There are old-growth forests, rare plants and endangered aquatic species and habitat in the area. However, the need to reshape the unit to avoid existing motorized activities would be required.

This polygon presents an opportunity to protect ecological groups that may be minimally represented in the National Wilderness Preservation System. Ecological groups with less than 5 percent of their national extent in the National Wilderness Preservation System comprise 670 acres. Ecological groups with between 10 and 20 percent of their national extent in the National Wilderness Preservation System comprise an additional 22,425 acres. (For map see Exhibit C – Sierra National Forest Evaluation Maps – Evaluation Map C8.)

## Exhibit A: Inyo National Forest Evaluation Maps



**Figure 1. Map index for Inyo National Forest lands evaluated for their suitability to be recommended for wilderness designation**

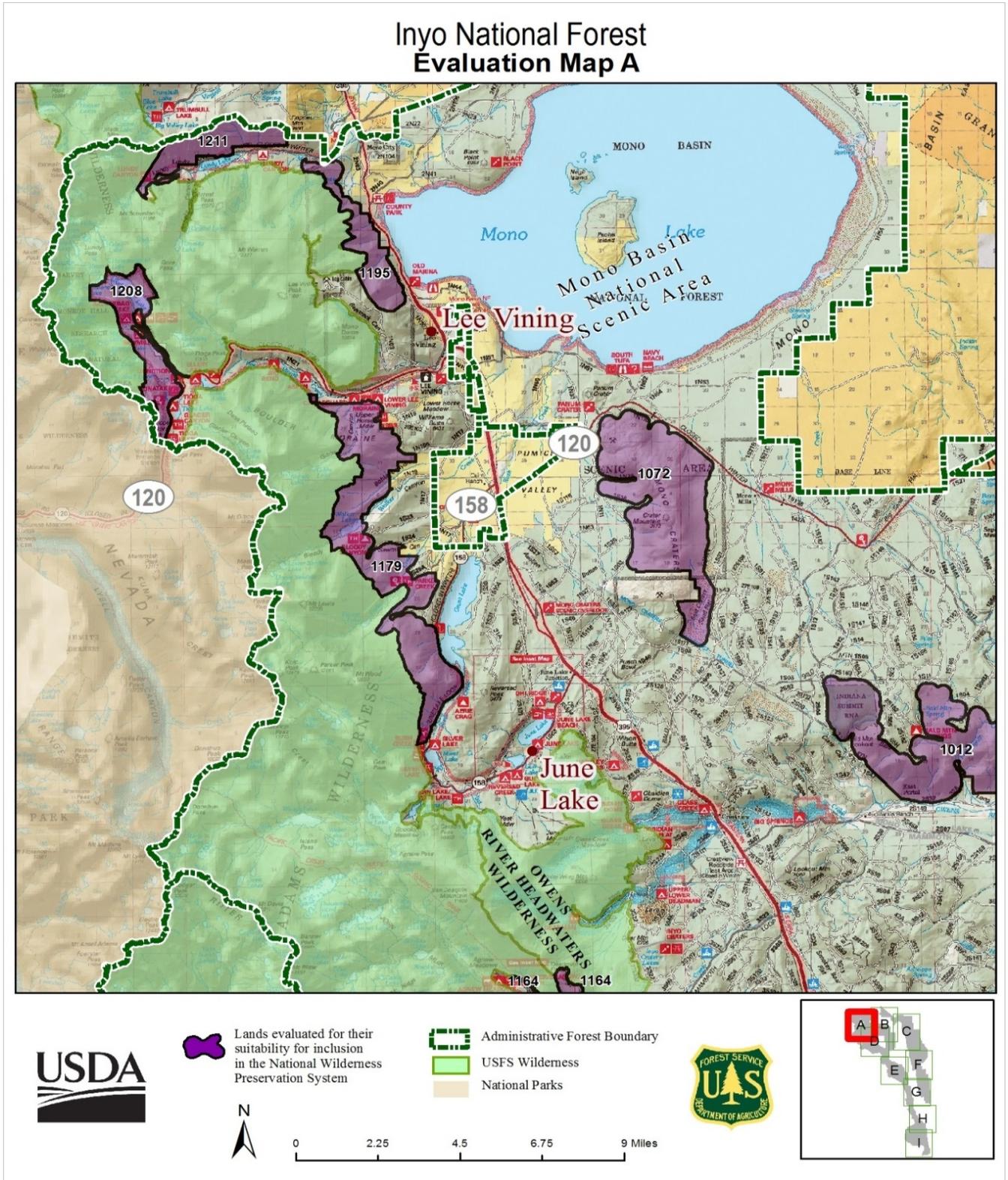
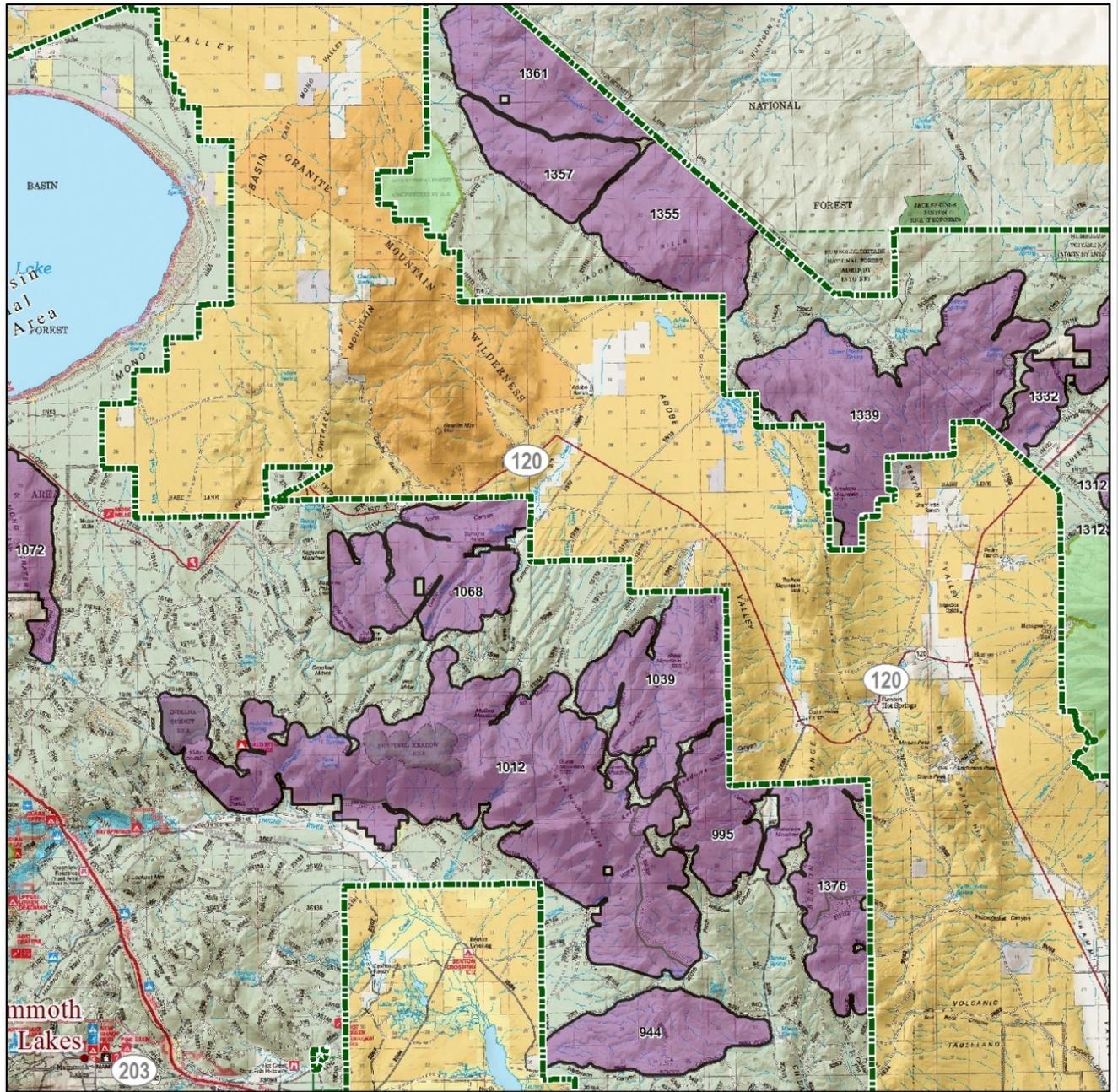


Figure 2. Inyo National Forest evaluation map A

### Inyo National Forest Evaluation Map B



 Lands evaluated for their suitability for inclusion in the National Wilderness Preservation System

 Administrative Forest Boundary  
 USFS Wilderness  
 National Parks



0 2.75 5.5 8.25 11 Miles

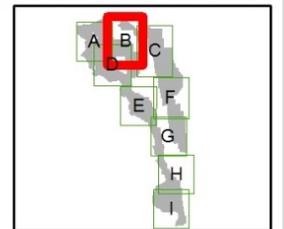


Figure 3. Inyo National Forest evaluation map B

### Inyo National Forest Evaluation Map C

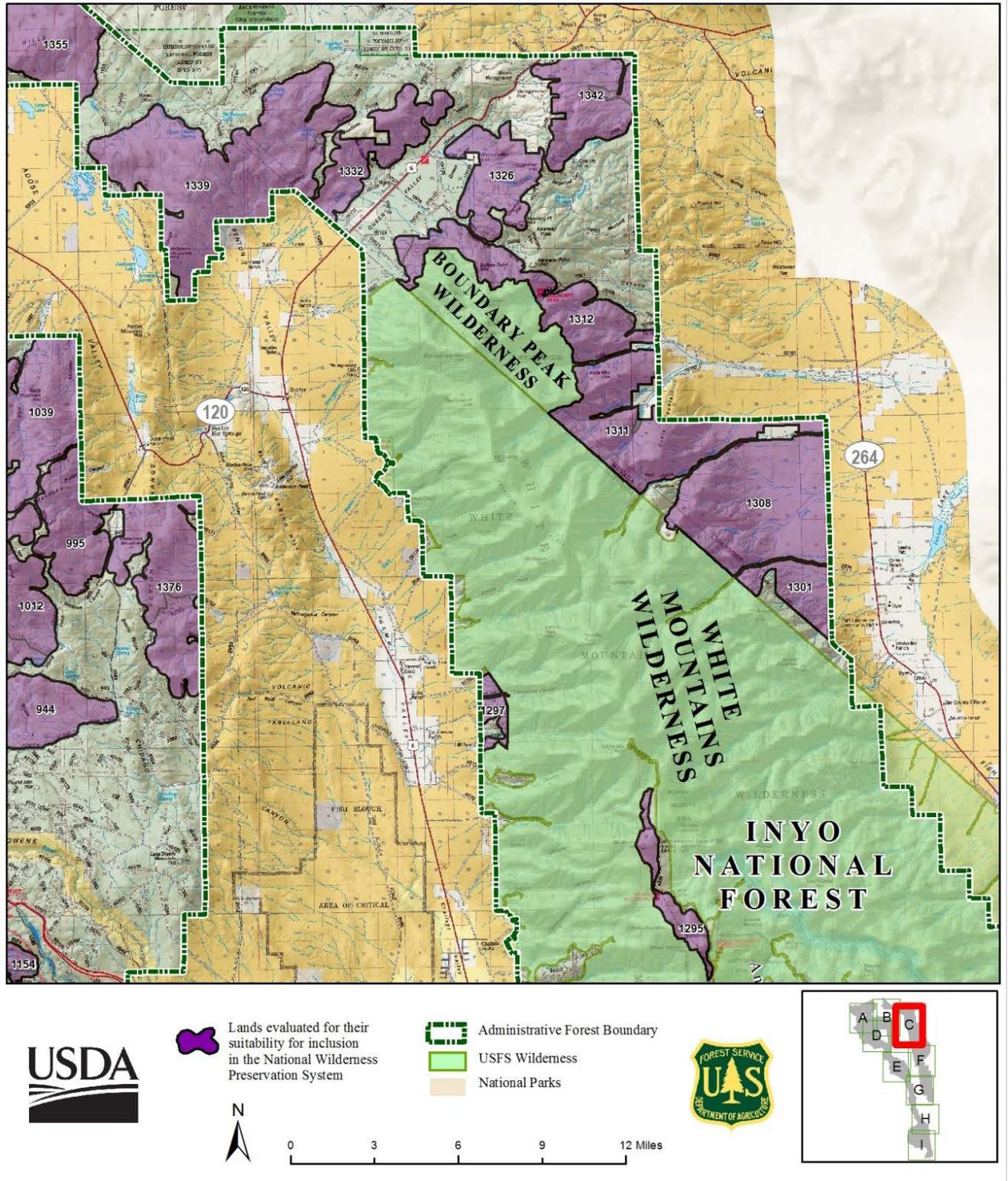


Figure 4. Inyo National Forest evaluation map C

### Inyo National Forest Evaluation Map D

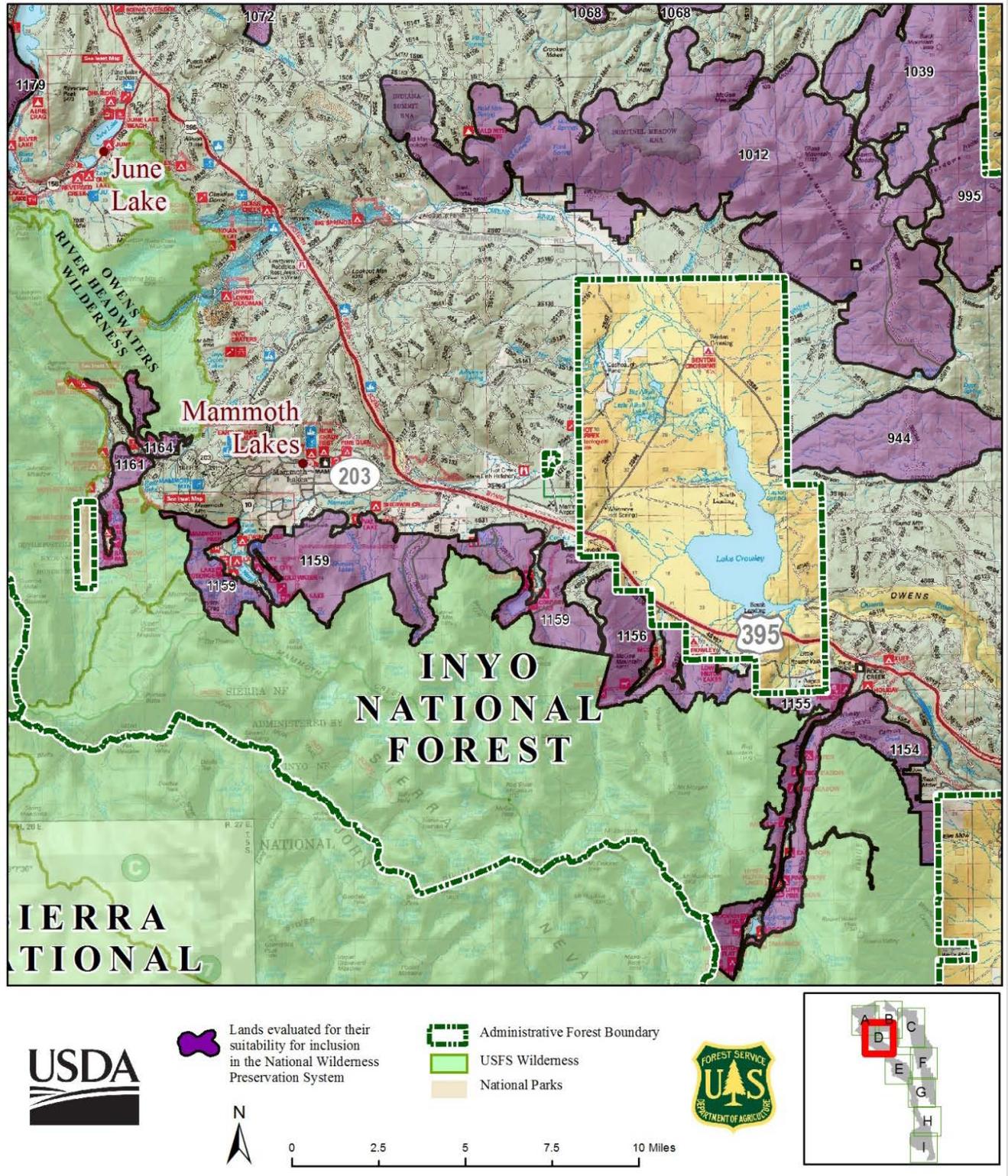
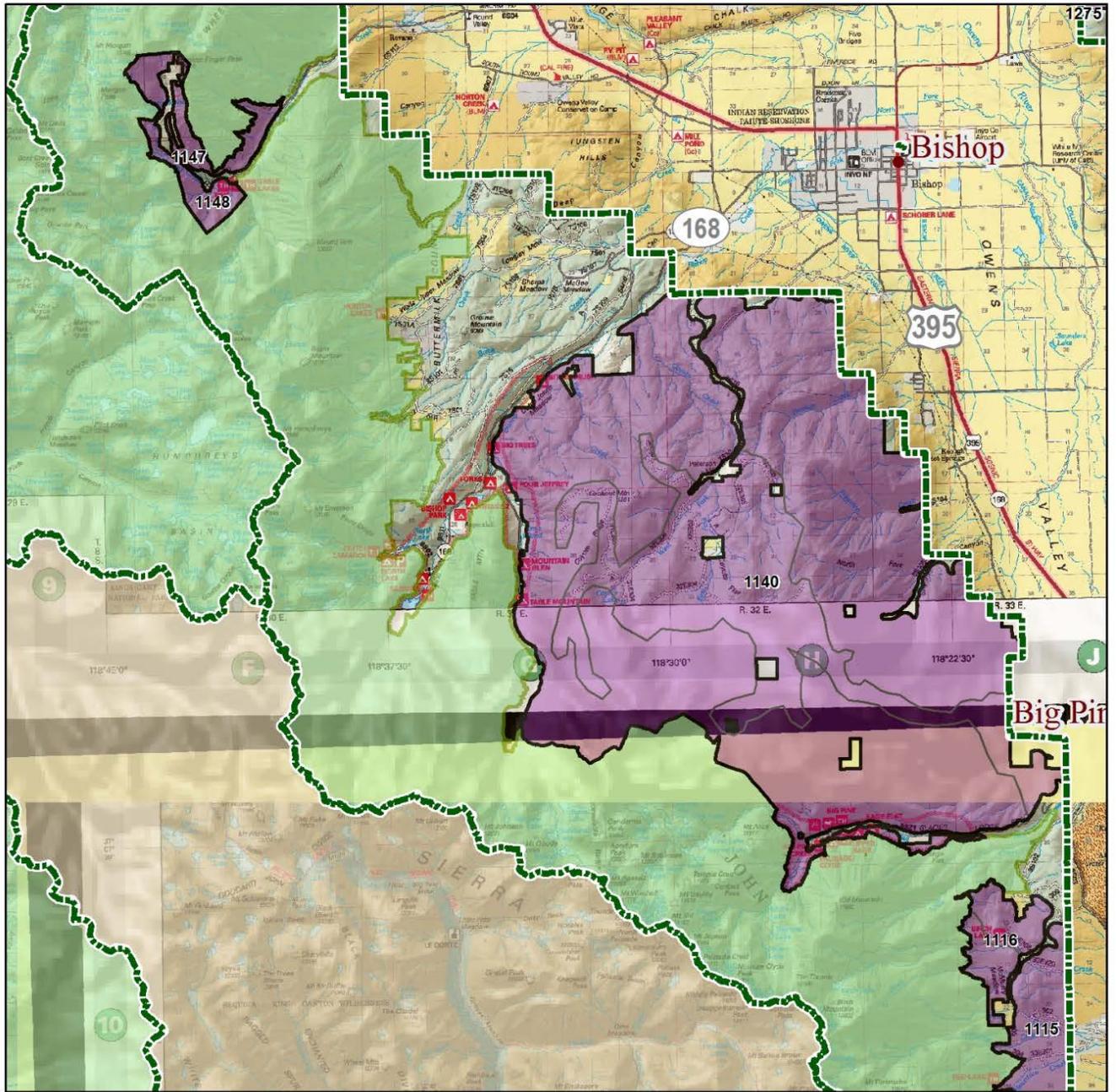


Figure 5. Inyo National Forest evaluation map D

### Inyo National Forest Evaluation Map E



 Lands evaluated for their suitability for inclusion in the National Wilderness Preservation System

 Administrative Forest Boundary  
 USFS Wilderness  
 National Parks



0 2.25 4.5 6.75 9 Miles

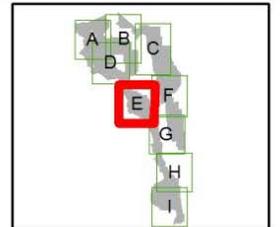


Figure 6. Inyo National Forest evaluation map E

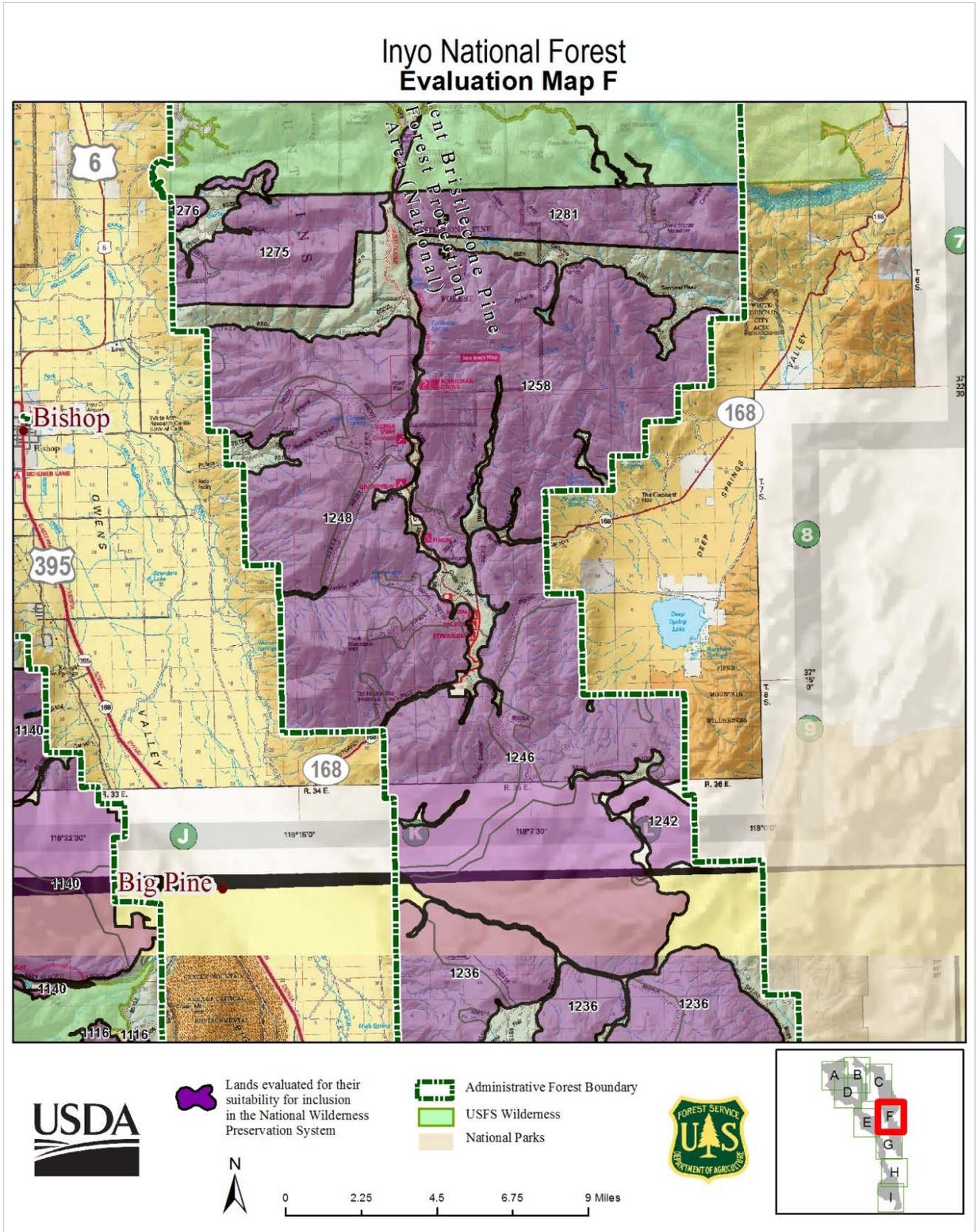
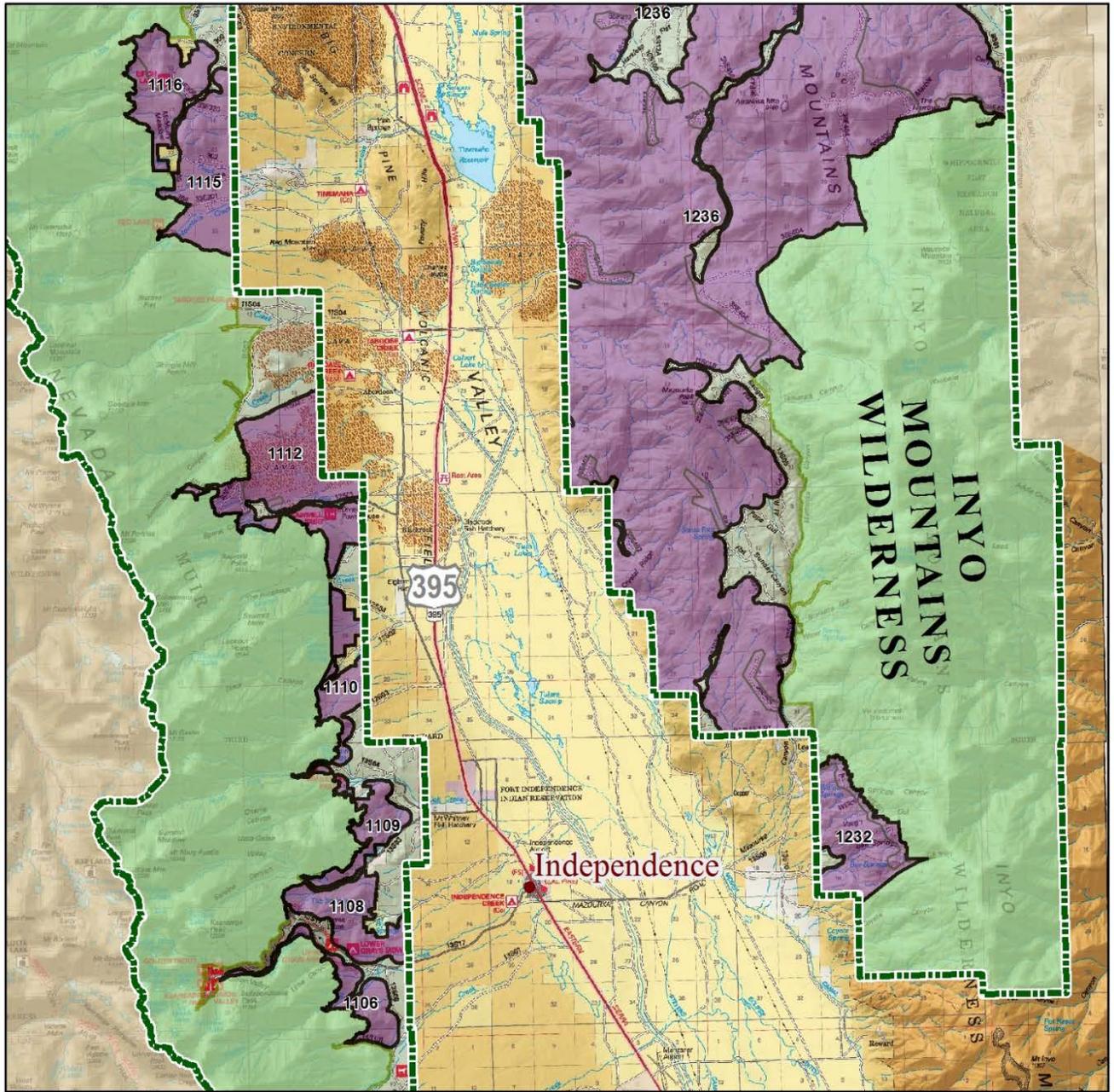


Figure 7. Inyo National Forest evaluation map F

### Inyo National Forest Evaluation Map G



 Lands evaluated for their suitability for inclusion in the National Wilderness Preservation System

 Administrative Forest Boundary  
 USFS Wilderness  
 National Parks

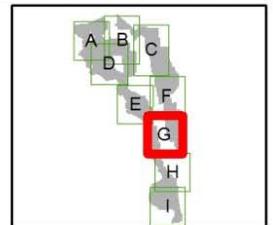
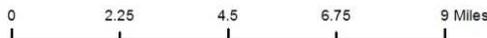
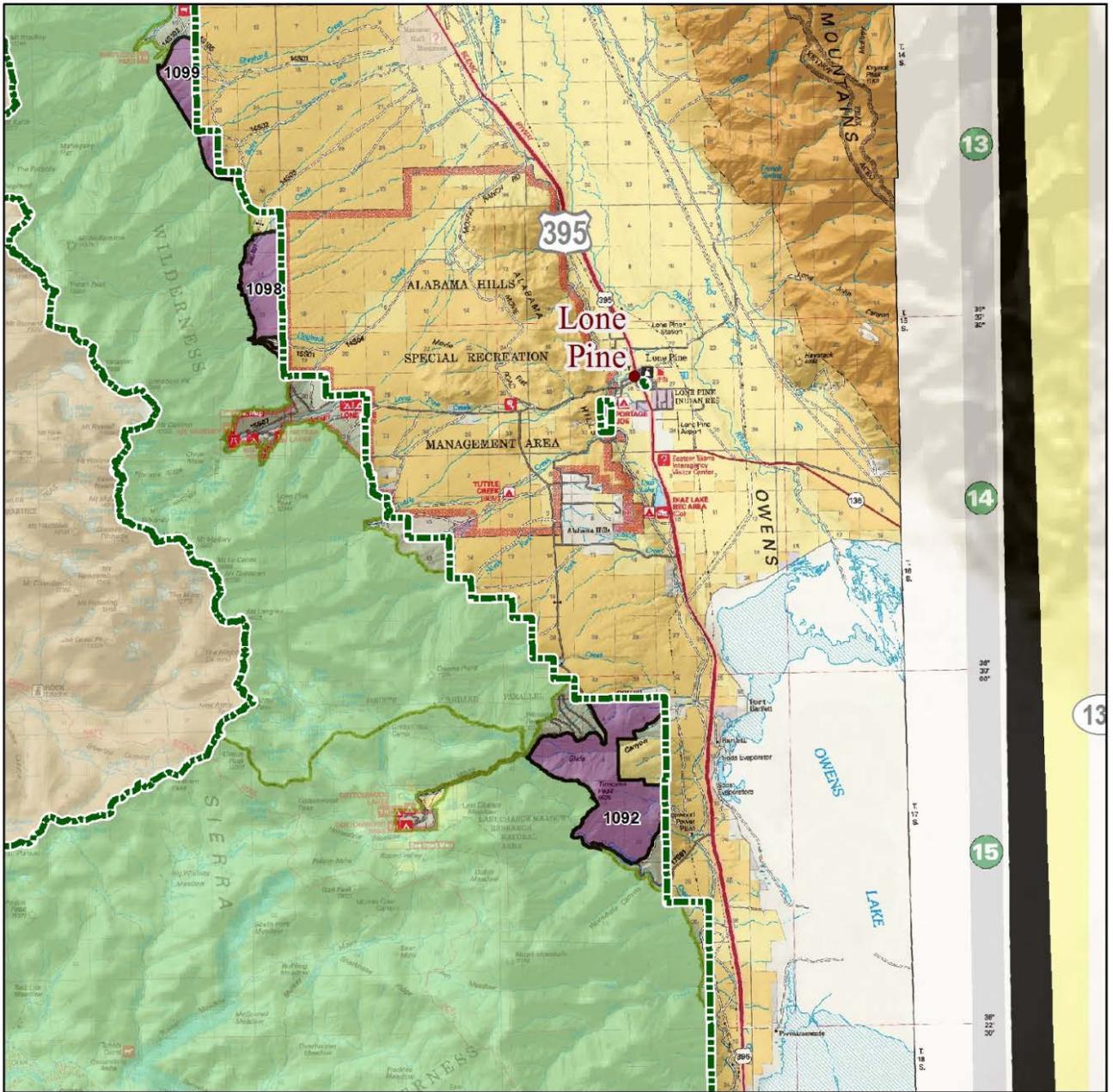


Figure 8. Inyo National Forest evaluation map G

## Inyo National Forest Evaluation Map H



 Lands evaluated for their suitability for inclusion in the National Wilderness Preservation System

 Administrative Forest Boundary  
 USFS Wilderness  
 National Parks



0 2.25 4.5 6.75 9 Miles

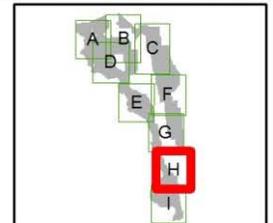


Figure 9. Inyo National Forest evaluation map H

# Inyo National Forest Evaluation Map I

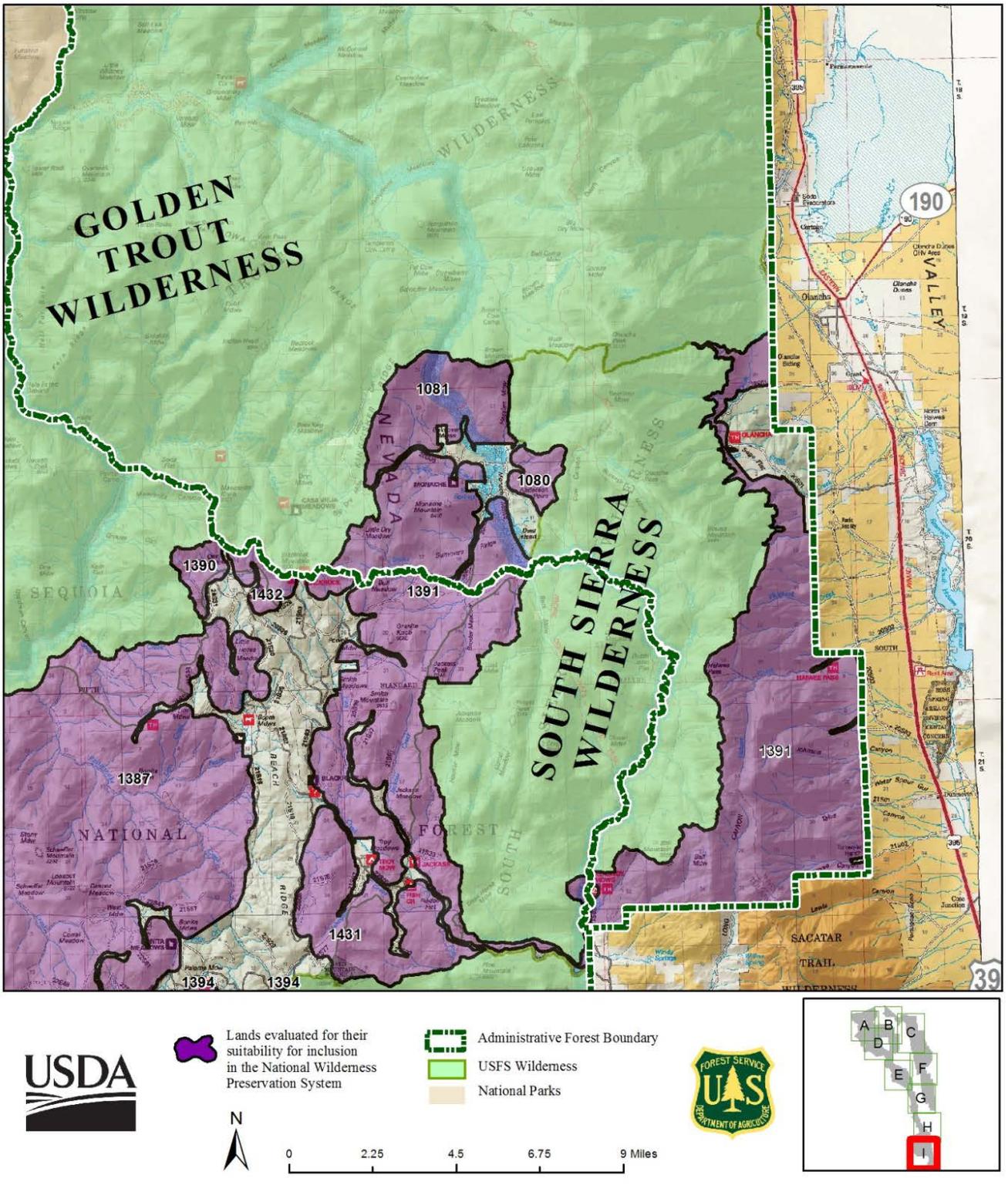
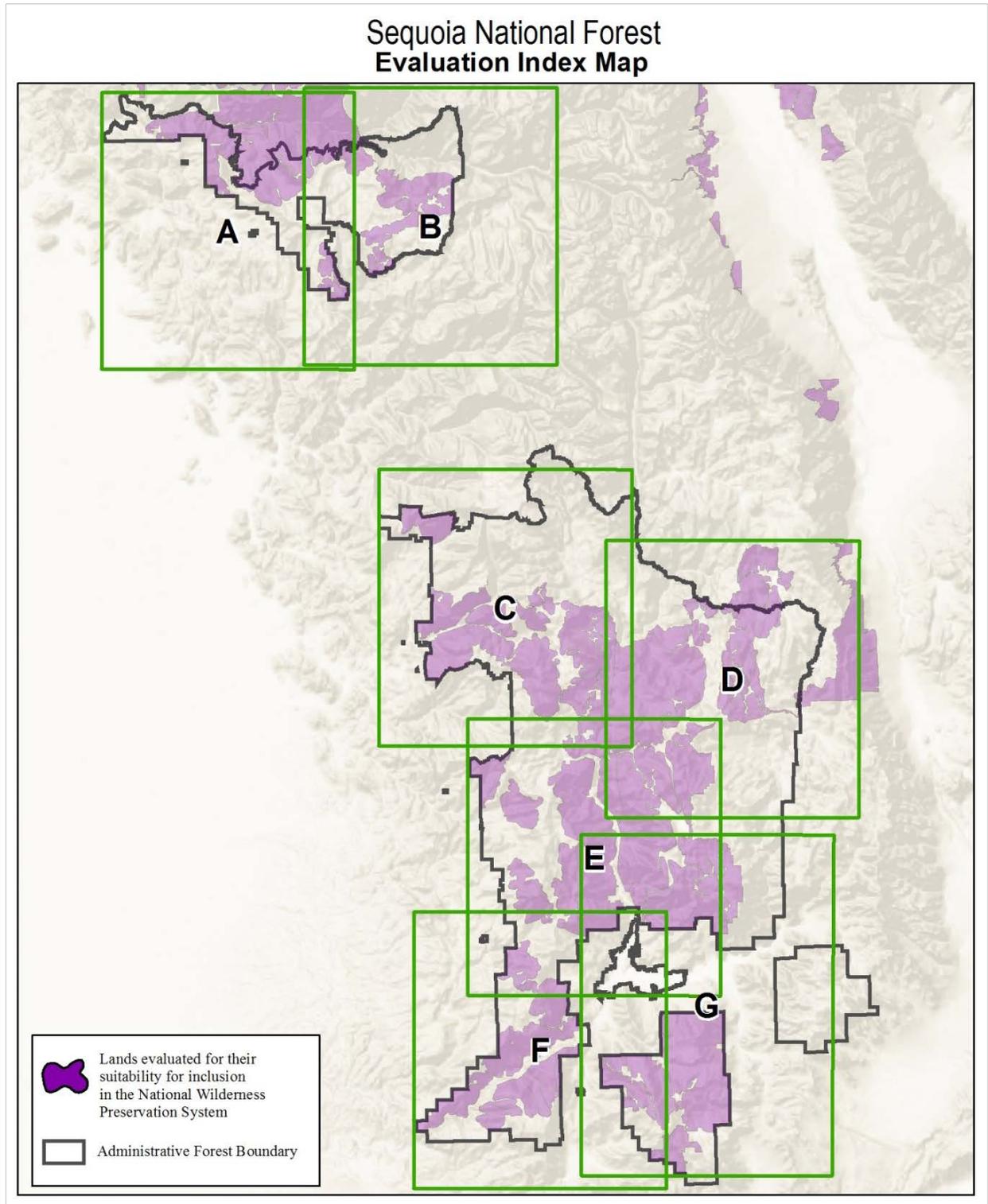


Figure 10. Inyo National Forest evaluation map I

## Exhibit B: Sequoia National Forest Evaluation Maps



**Figure 11. Map index for Sequoia National Forest lands evaluated for their suitability to be recommended for wilderness designation**

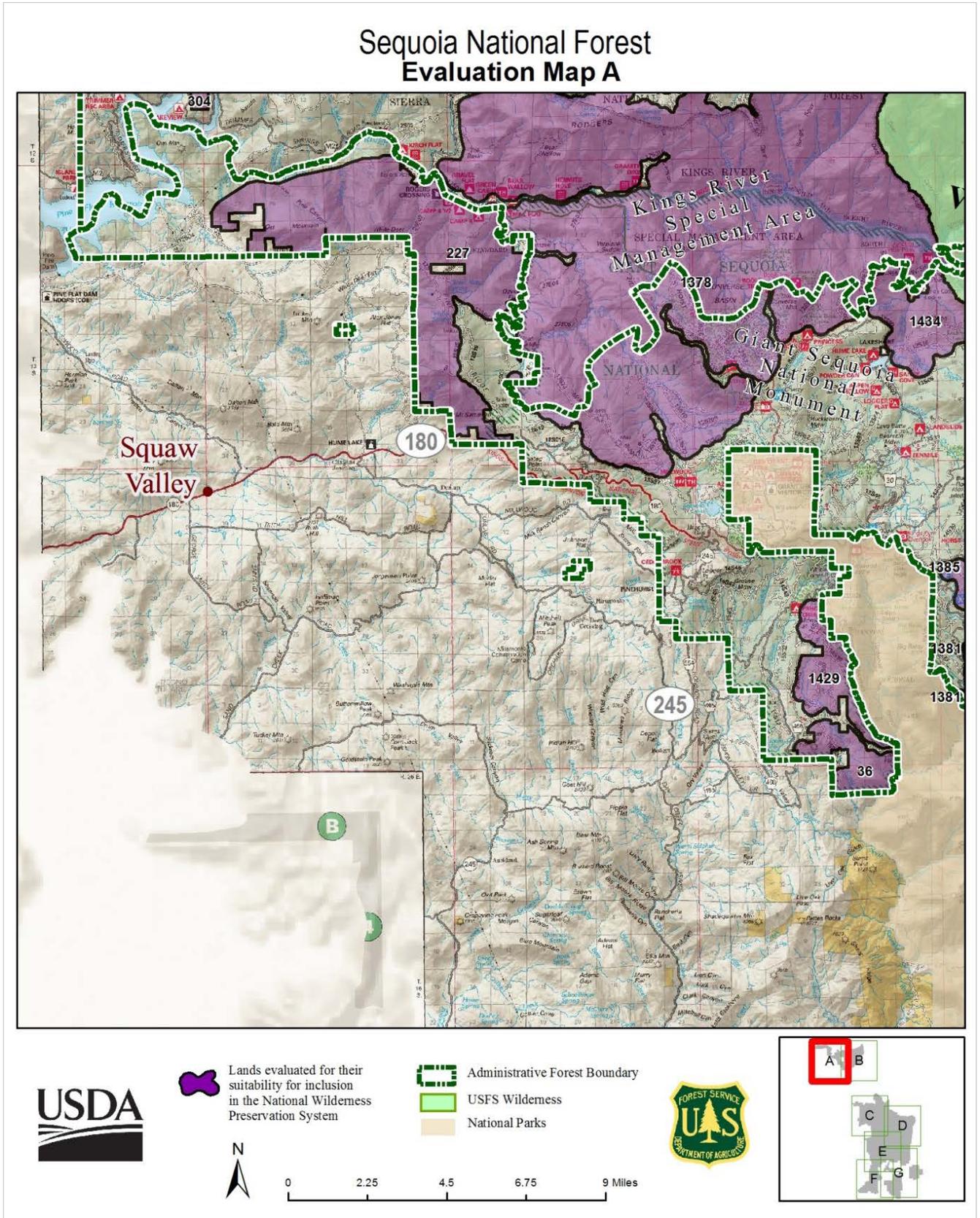


Figure 12. Sequoia National Forest evaluation map A

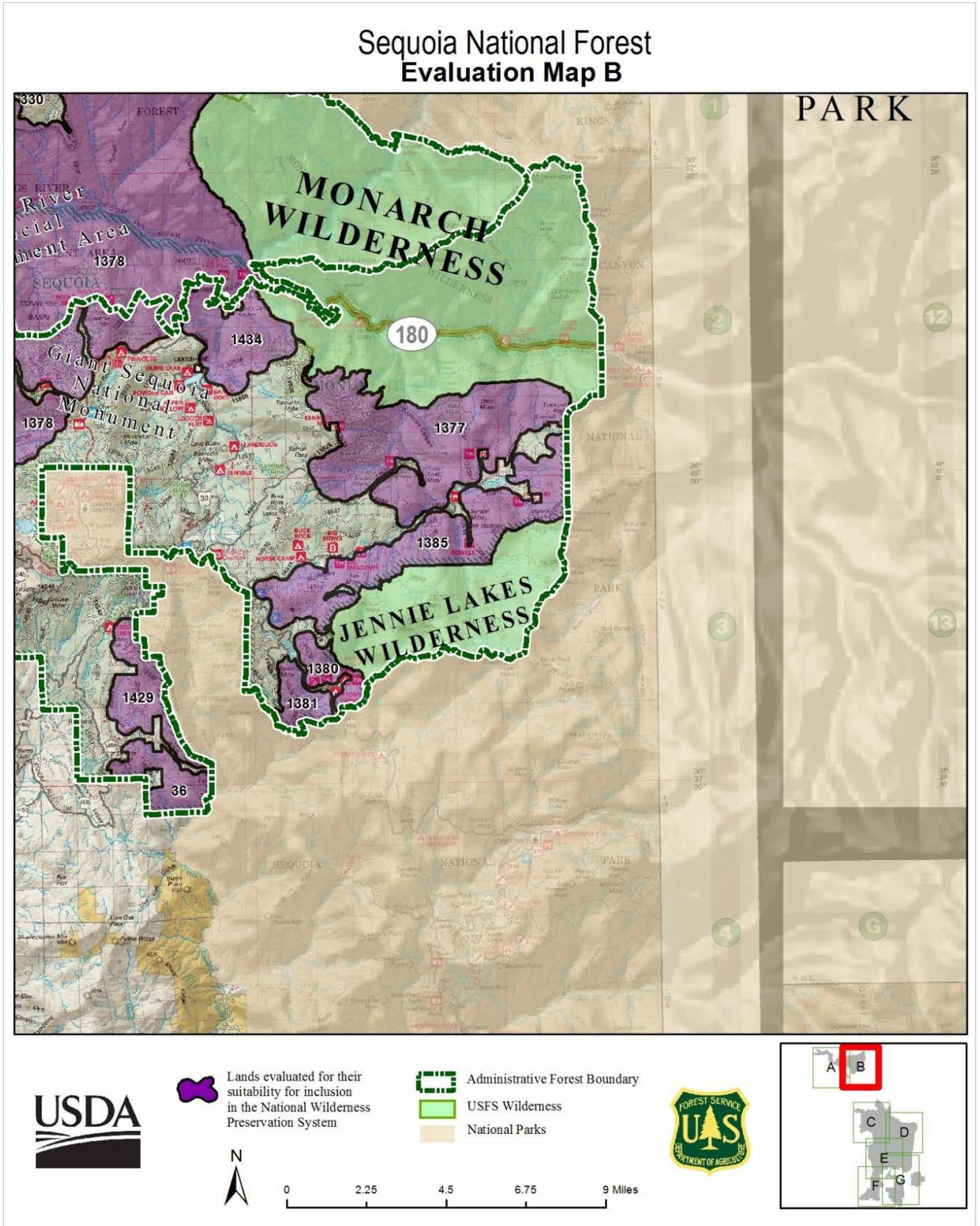
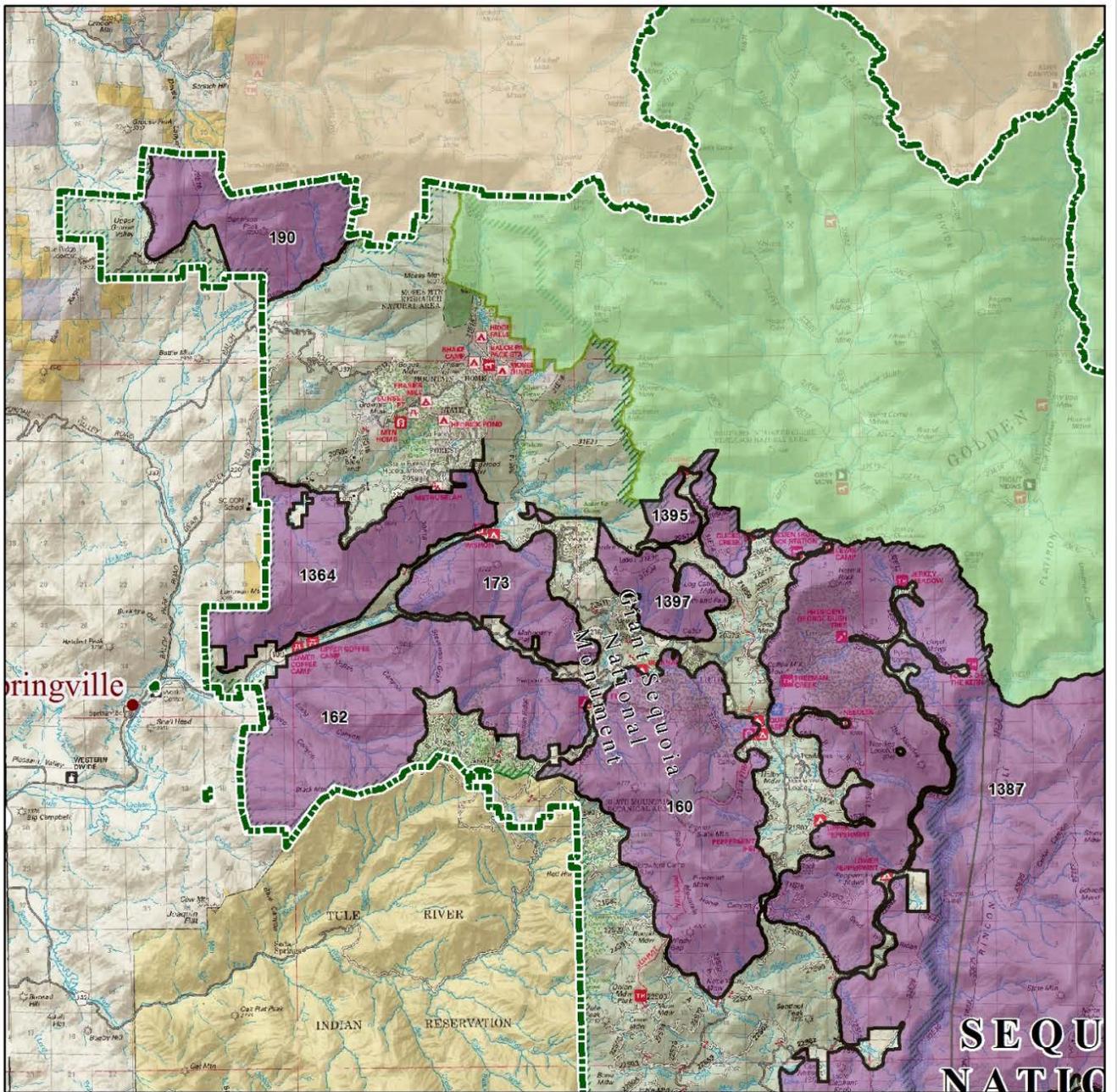


Figure 13. Sequoia National Forest evaluation map B

## Sequoia National Forest Evaluation Map C



Lands evaluated for their suitability for inclusion in the National Wilderness Preservation System

Administrative Forest Boundary  
 USFS Wilderness  
 National Parks

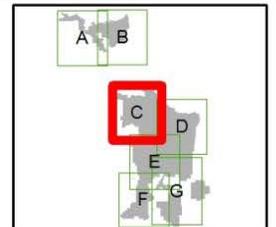
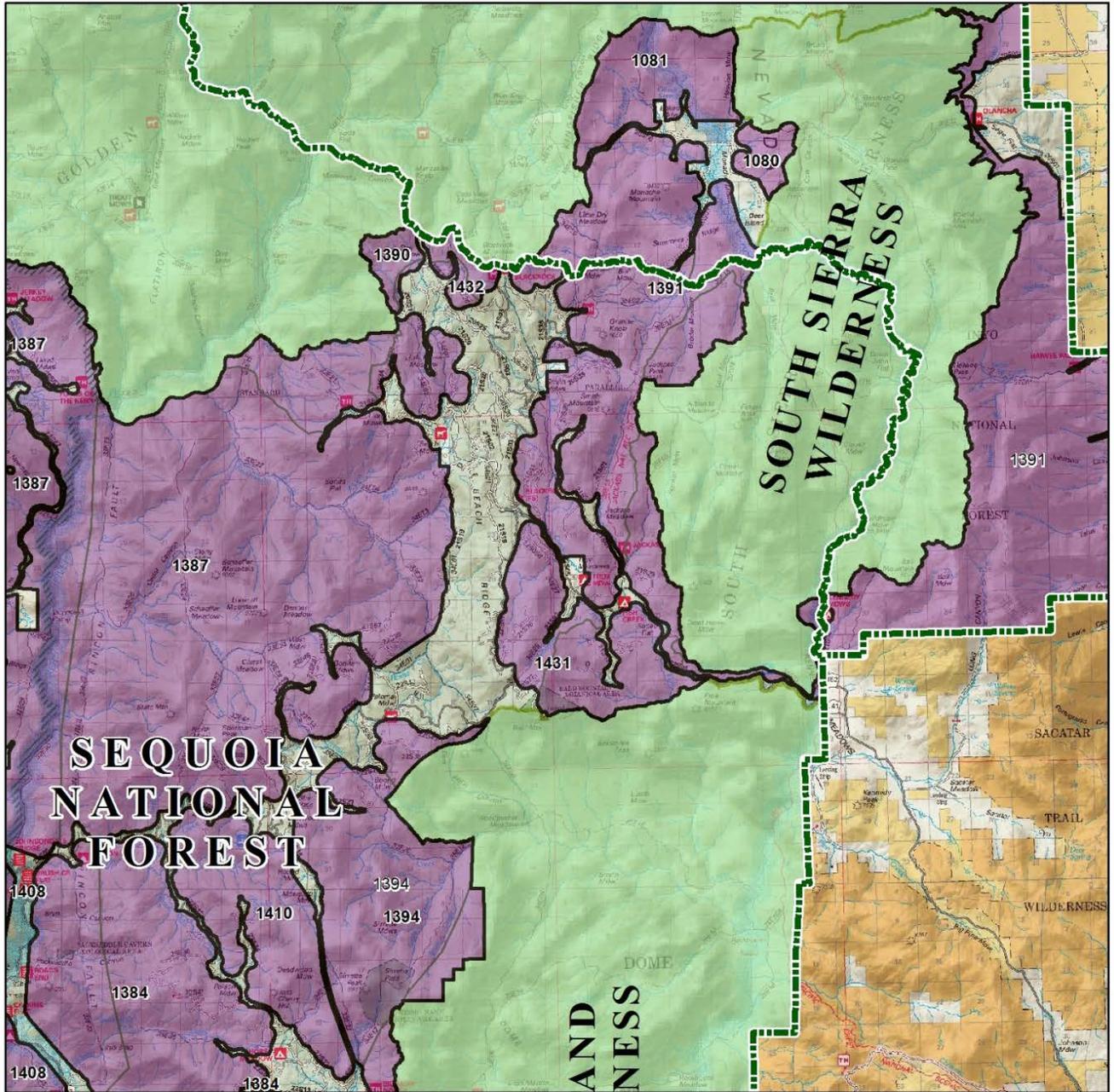


Figure 14. Sequoia National Forest evaluation map C

### Sequoia National Forest Evaluation Map D



Lands evaluated for their suitability for inclusion in the National Wilderness Preservation System



Administrative Forest Boundary



USFS Wilderness



National Parks

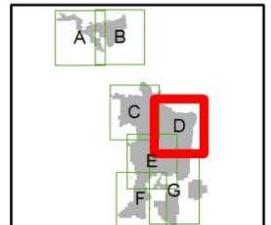
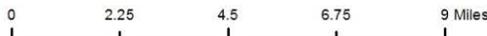
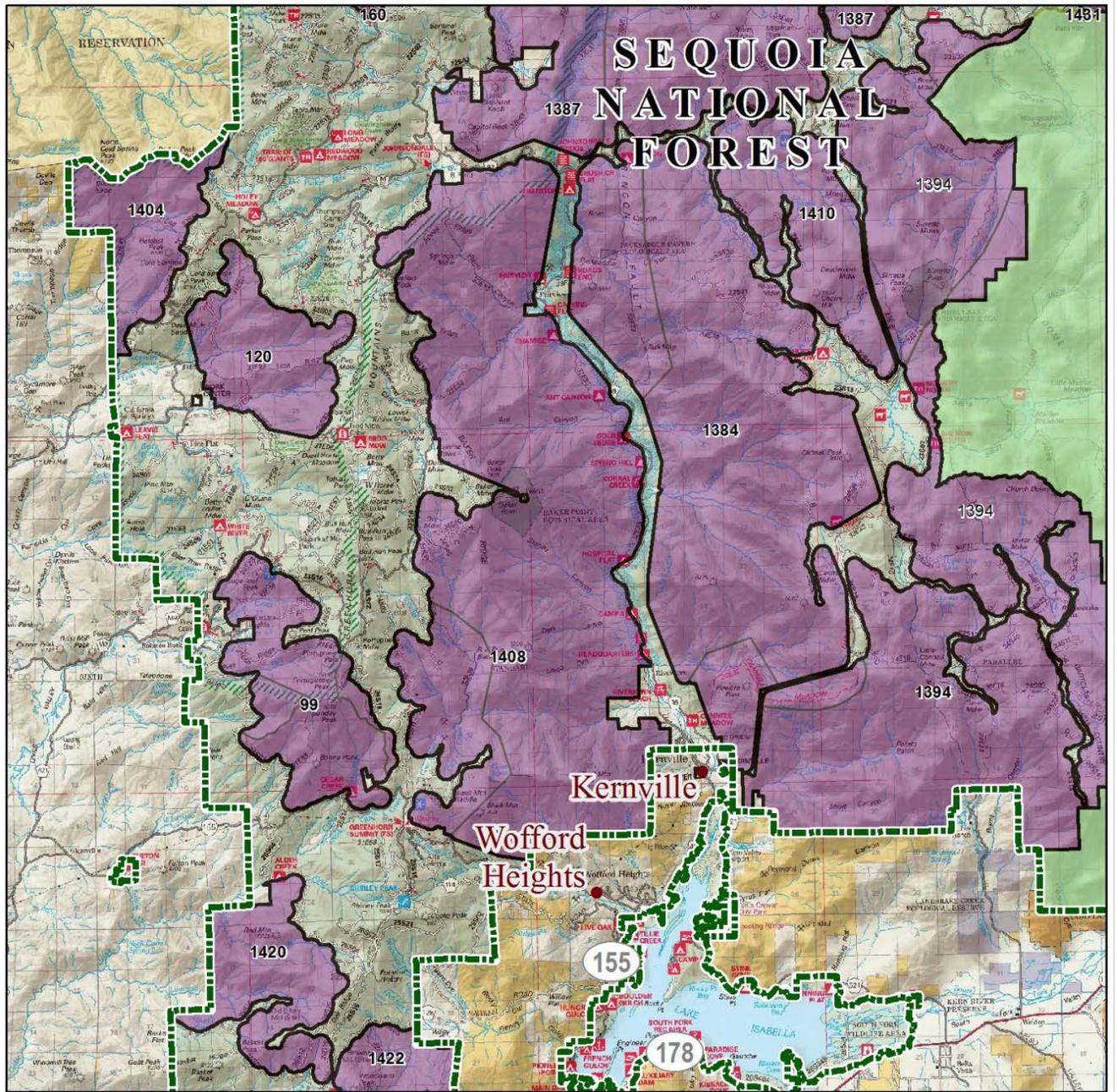


Figure 15. Sequoia National Forest evaluation map D

## Sequoia National Forest Evaluation Map E



 Lands evaluated for their suitability for inclusion in the National Wilderness Preservation System

 Administrative Forest Boundary  
 USFS Wilderness  
 National Parks



0 2.25 4.5 6.75 9 Miles

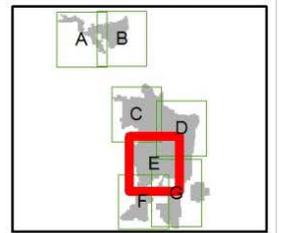


Figure 16. Sequoia National Forest evaluation map E

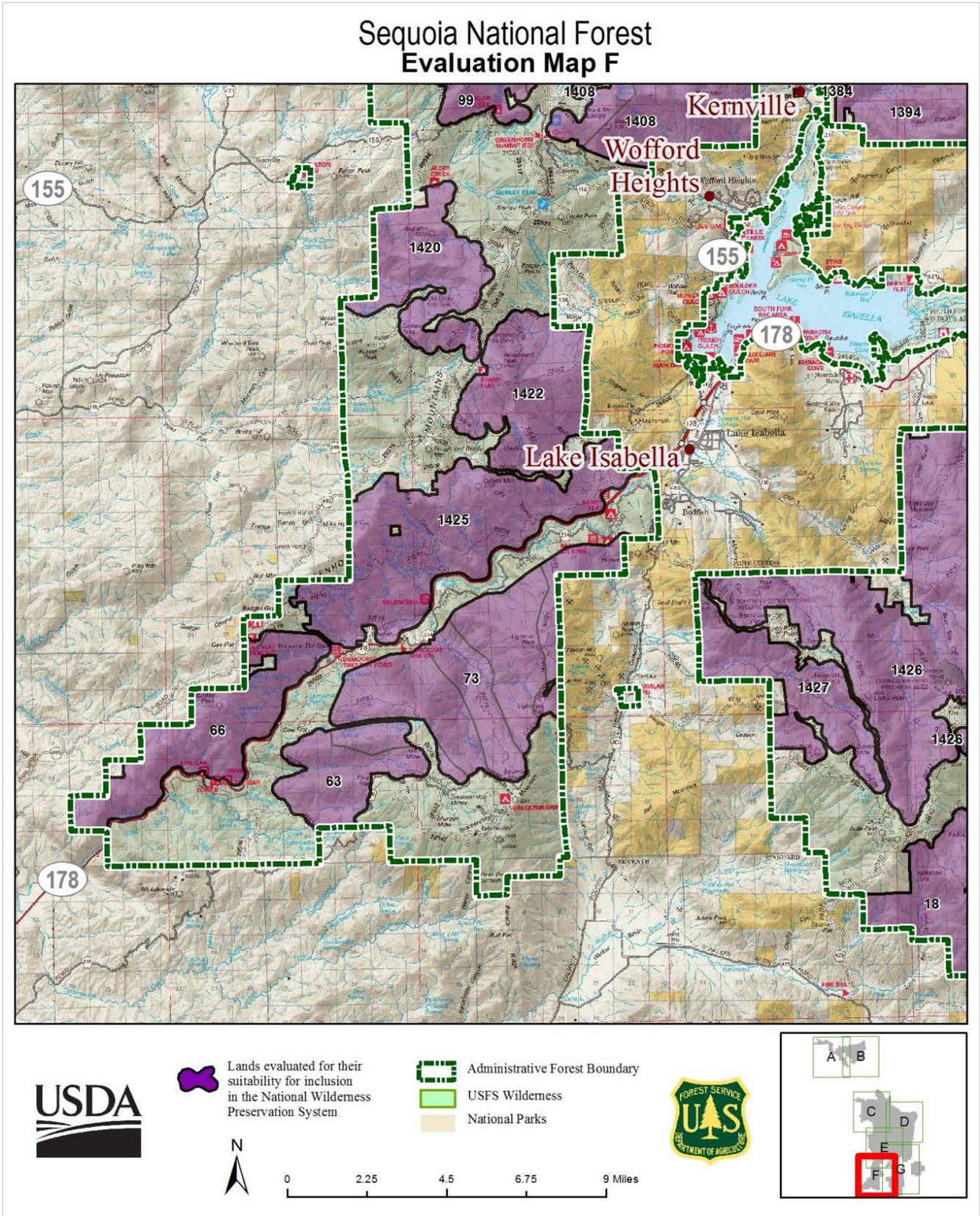


Figure 17. Sequoia National Forest evaluation map F

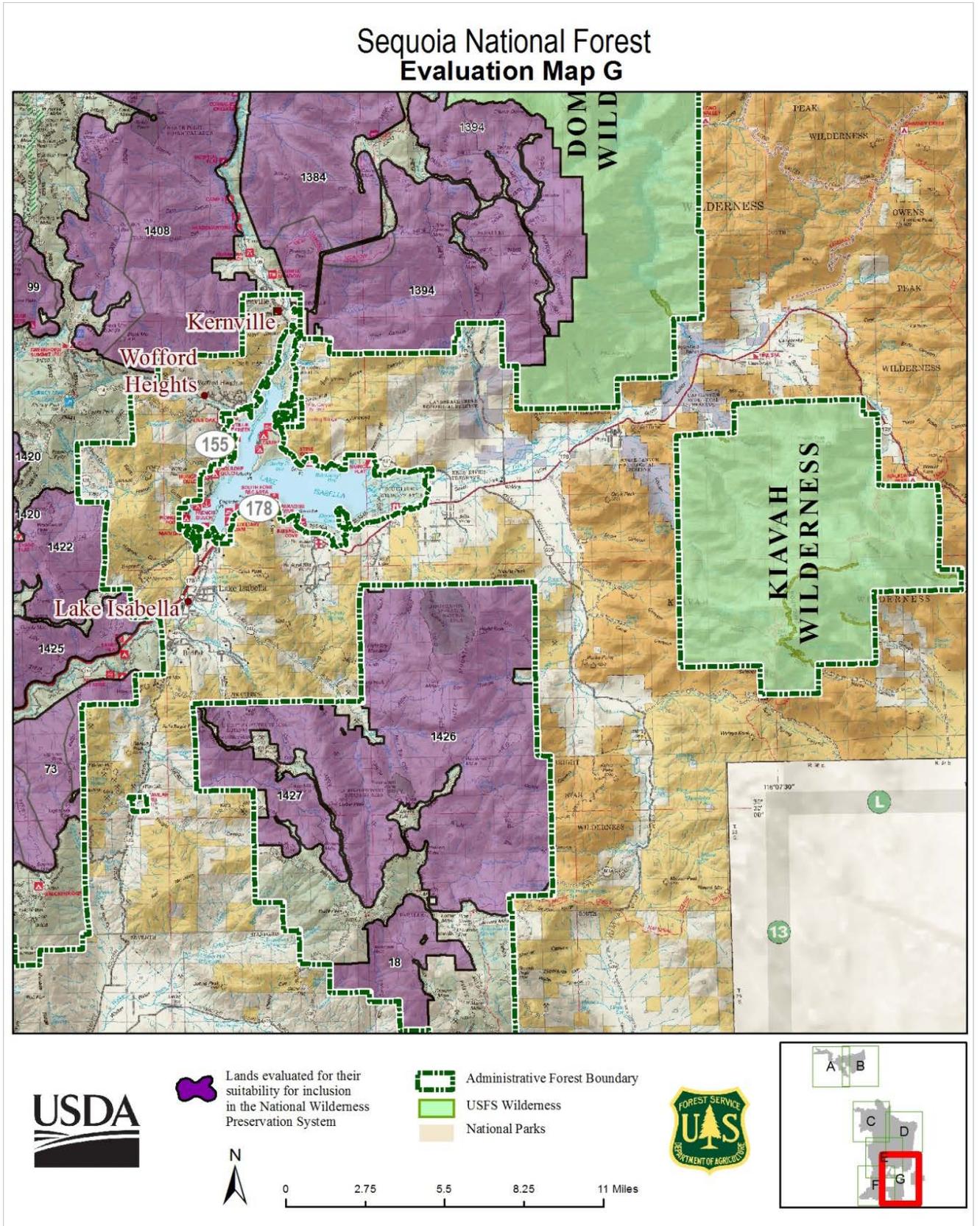
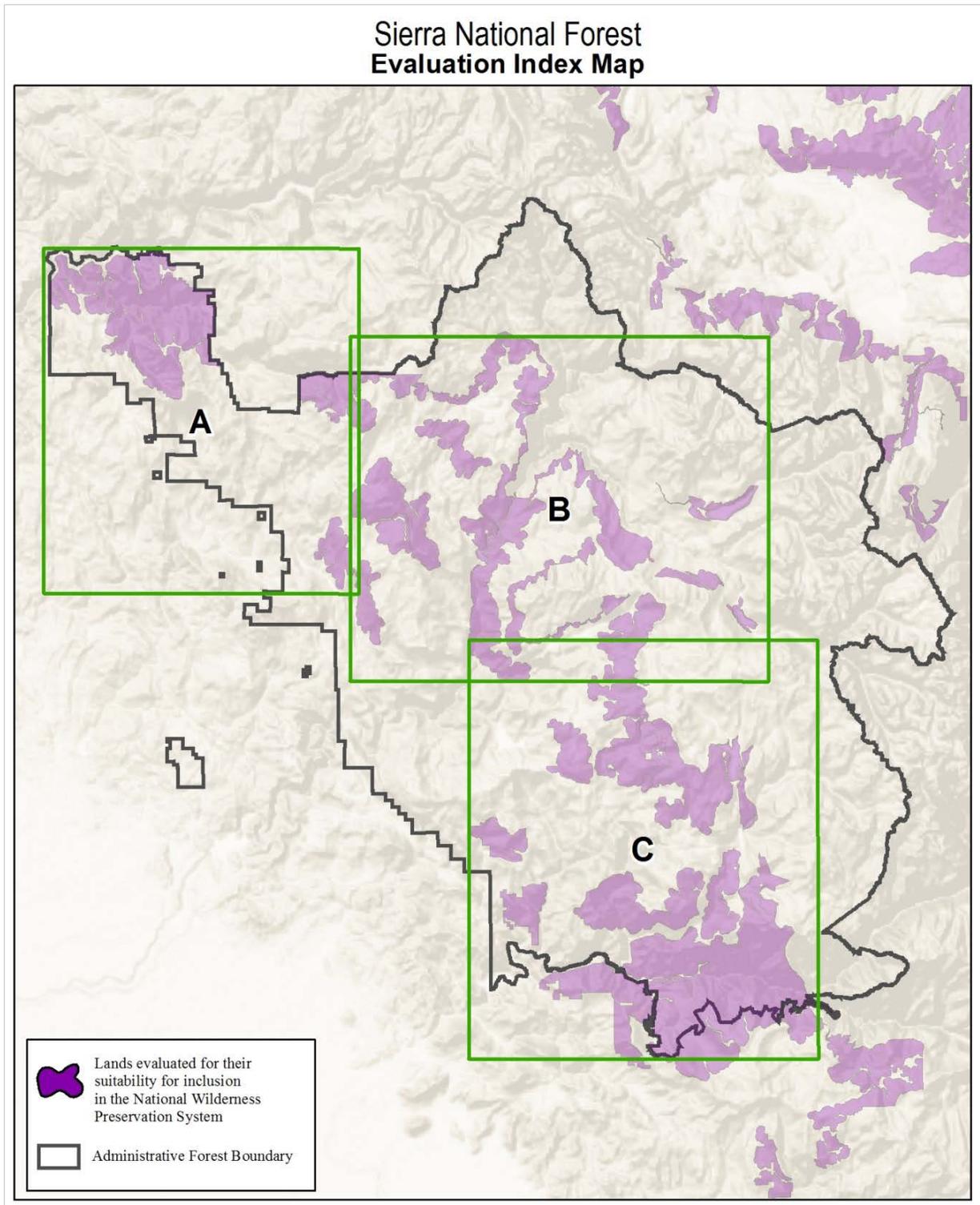


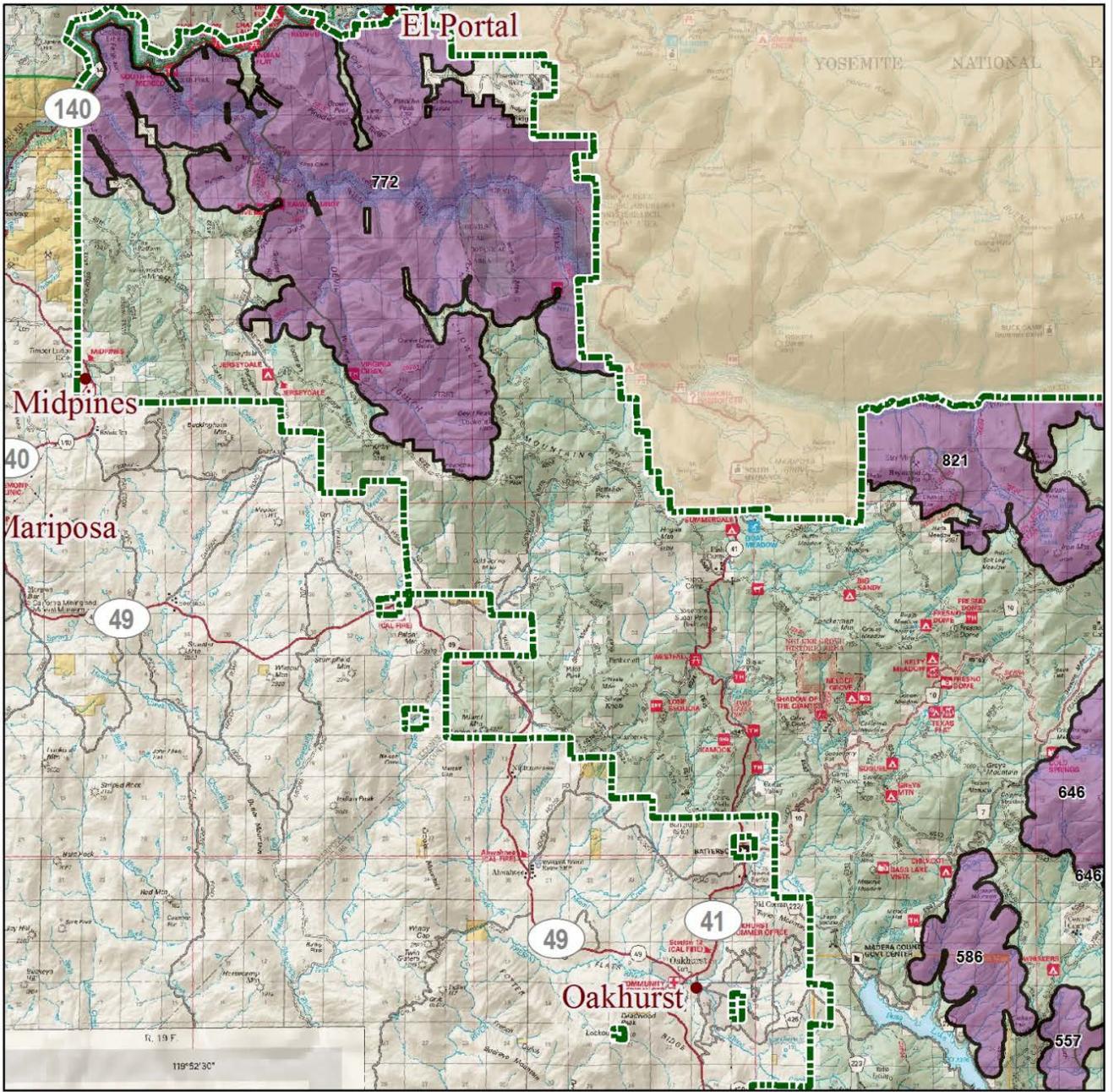
Figure 18. Sequoia National Forest evaluation map G

## Exhibit C: Sierra National Forest Evaluation Maps



**Figure 19. Map index for Sierra National Forest lands evaluated for their suitability to be recommended for wilderness designation**

# Sierra National Forest Evaluation Map A



Lands evaluated for their suitability for inclusion in the National Wilderness Preservation System



Administrative Forest Boundary  
USFS Wilderness  
National Parks



0 2.25 4.5 6.75 9 Miles

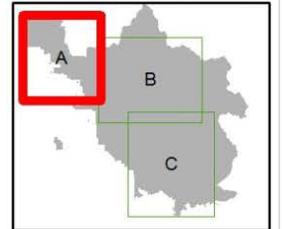
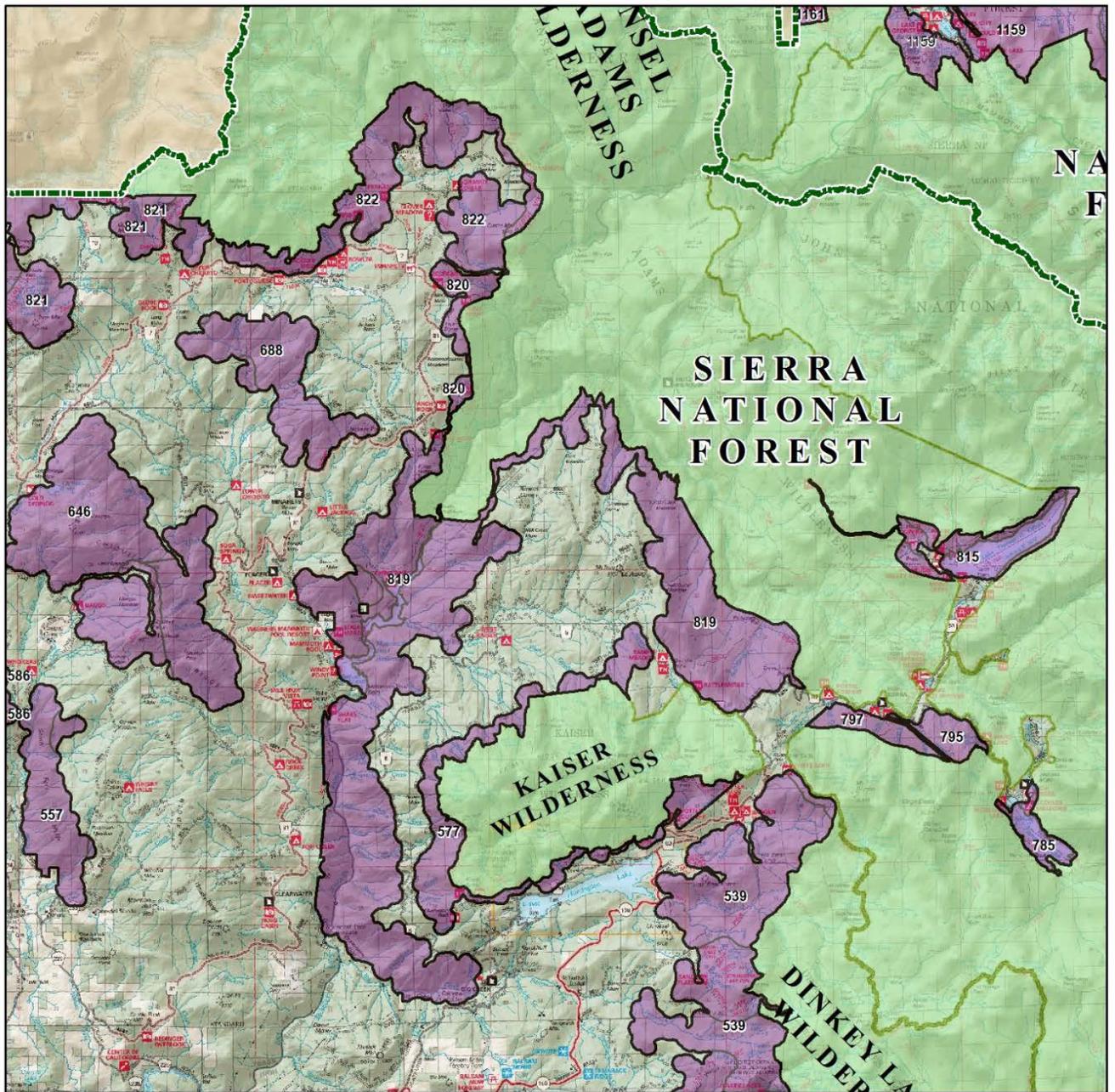


Figure 20. Sierra National Forest evaluation map A

### Sierra National Forest Evaluation Map B



 Lands evaluated for their suitability for inclusion in the National Wilderness Preservation System

 Administrative Forest Boundary  
 USFS Wilderness  
 National Parks

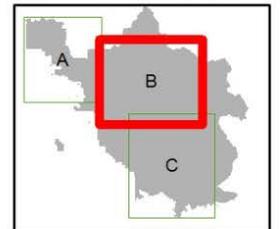
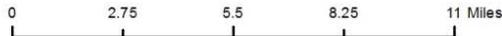
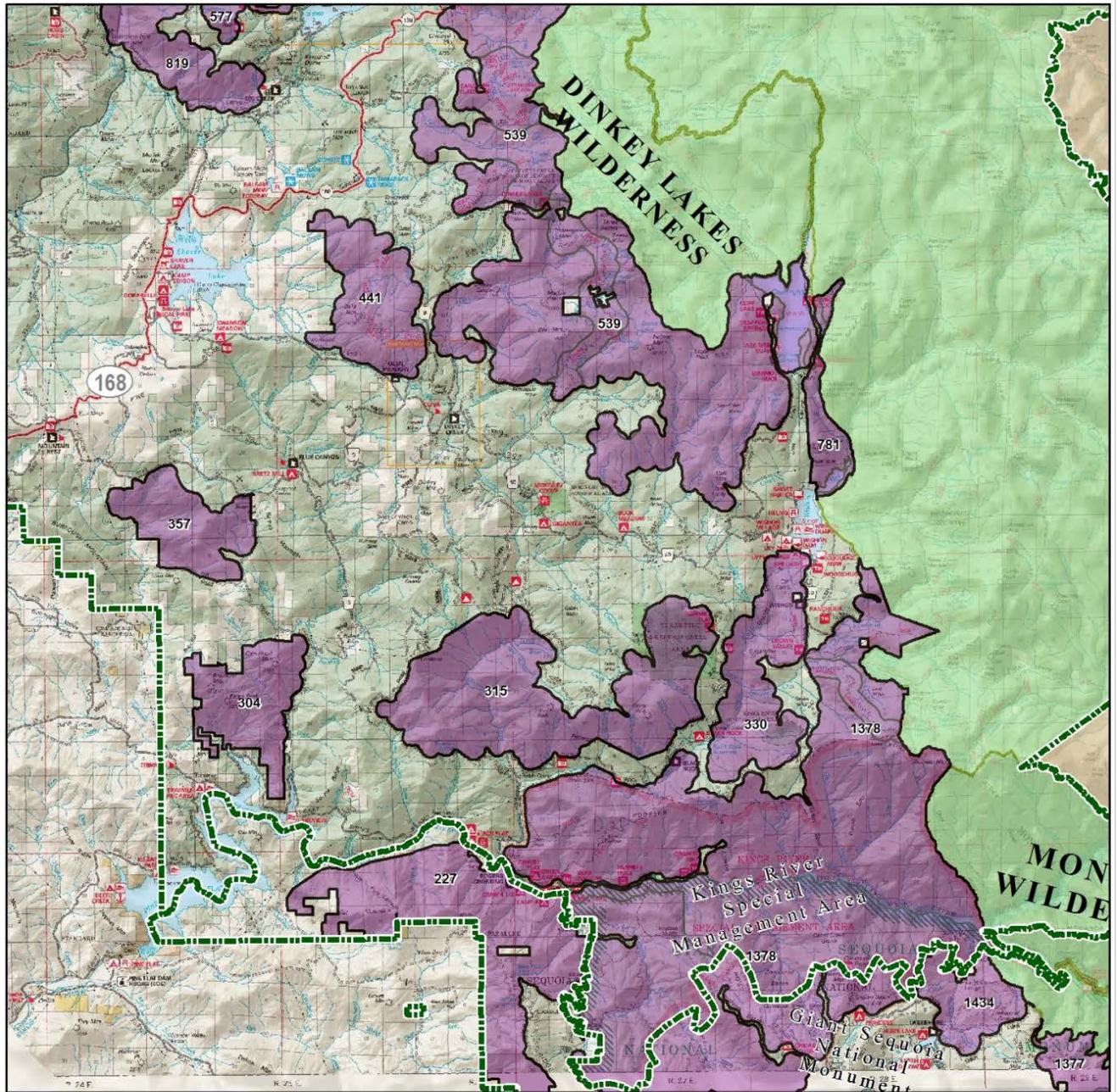


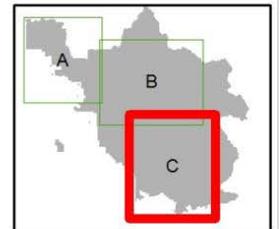
Figure 21. Sierra National Forest evaluation map B

### Sierra National Forest Evaluation Map C



 Lands evaluated for their suitability for inclusion in the National Wilderness Preservation System

 Administrative Forest Boundary  
 USFS Wilderness  
 National Parks



0 2.75 5.5 8.25 11 Miles

Figure 22. Sierra National Forest evaluation map C