

EXHIBIT 2

BLM, First Report to the Congress, California Desert Conservation Area (1978)

FIRST PROGRESS REPORT TO THE CONGRESS

CALIFORNIA DESERT CONSERVATION AREA



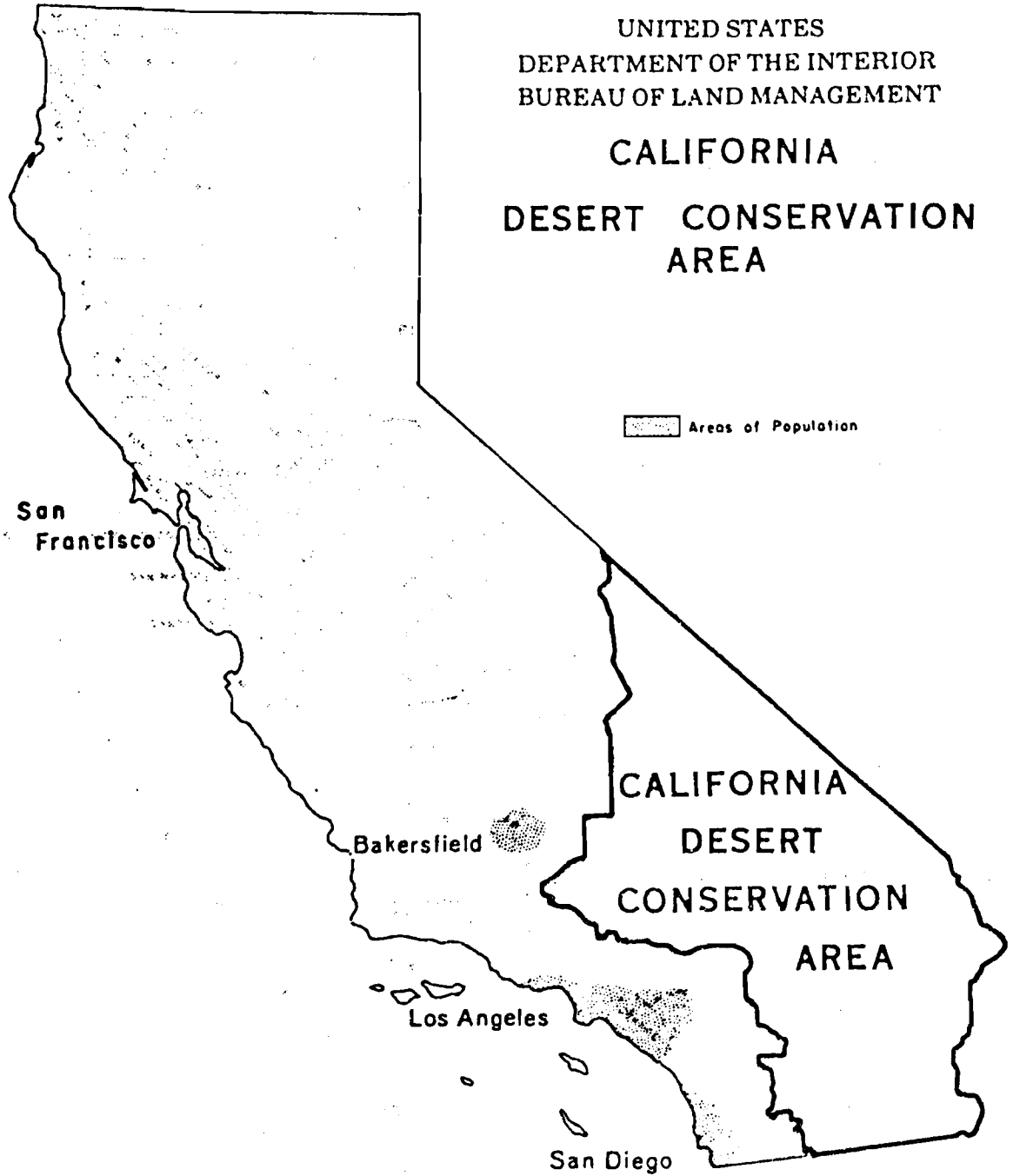
United States
Department of the Interior
Bureau of Land Management

First Progress Report to the Congress

CALIFORNIA DESERT CONSERVATION AREA

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UNITED STATES
DEPARTMENT OF THE INTERIOR
BUREAU OF LAND MANAGEMENT

CALIFORNIA
DESERT CONSERVATION
AREA

 Areas of Population

San
Francisco

Bakersfield

Los Angeles

San Diego

CALIFORNIA
DESERT
CONSERVATION
AREA

Summary

As noted in Section 601 of the Federal Land Policy and Management Act of 1976 (FLPMA) (43 U.S.C. 1701, 1781), the California Desert:

- Contains historical scenic, archaeological, environmental, biological, cultural, scientific, educational, recreational and economic resources uniquely located adjacent to an area of large population.
- Is a total ecosystem that is extremely fragile, easily scarred and slowly healed, with current use pressures already taking a growing toll.
- Must have interim critical management while a multiple-use plan for all resources, based on sustained yield to provide resources for future generations, is being formulated for implementation by September 30, 1980.

This is the first of two interim progress reports on the California Desert Program called for under FLPMA. In summary, the planning task is well underway and on schedule to meet the September 30, 1980, completion deadline and critical interim management work is meanwhile in progress.

Issues to be dealt with in the plan have been identified and include:

- How much Wilderness and where?
- Management of motorized vehicle activity on-road and off-road.
- Utility corridors and powerplant siting.
- Mineral exploration and development - Where and how much?
- Public land availability vs. private and military needs.
- Grazing and range conditions.
- Protection of wild burros and horses vs. range resource control.
- Natural and cultural resource protection.

The planning effort falls basically into two phases, each encompassing two years. The first involves massive inventories of resources and the values people place on them coupled with the building of a public involvement process and a planning framework. The second encompasses the analysis of inventory

information and public input to draft a comprehensive land use plan and environmental impact statement; to obtain public review and comment; and then to finalize the land use plan and its accompanying EIS.

At this point the inventory job covering over 16 million acres (12.5 million acres of public lands plus intermingled private lands) is well on its way to on-schedule completion by February 1979. Data is being entered and stored in computer memory banks for later retrieval and analysis as it is obtained.

The planning framework development is on schedule with policy guidelines and a prototype plan outline and EIS preparation plan drafted for use when the analyzed data is ready to shape into a draft plan containing alternative approaches to resolving the issues.

Public participation has been strong, starting with the appointment of a broadly based 15 member Advisory Committee in early 1977 whose sessions have been used as public forums for comment and advice in its eight meetings to date. Public interest has been solicited through radio and TV announcements, and public opinion surveyed through national and regional polls.

Critical interim management efforts have included the deployment of a small but well trained uniformed Desert Ranger force. They are enforcing resource protection compliance and providing emergency visitor aid. A dunes system has been closed to vehicles to protect endangered plant species. Construction on segments of the Pacific Crest Trail within the Desert is underway. One visitor center is in full operation and construction of a second center will start soon. An EIS on a major high potential geothermal area has been started

and other major energy transmission projects are being handled with individual EIS efforts as applications are received.

No insurmountable problems are foreseen at this point. Funding appropriations under the \$40 million FLPMA authorization have been adequate with some adjustment of internal BLM priorities to channel money to the Desert effort. It is important that interim management appropriations be kept adequate through FY-80 and FY-81 as the needs to protect desert resources are unending.

There has been a problem with the Bureau's own slow start in developing mining and surface protection regulations under Section 601 of FLPMA, but such regulations should be ready for issuance.

If there is any problem at present, it is one of adequate time to do a massive task in a quality manner. The BLM is coping well with this to date and will continue to apply itself to meeting the responsibility assigned it by Congress in the time it has been allotted.

WILDERNESS

Public lands in the California Desert Conservation Area are being inventoried for the characteristics presented in Section 2(c) of the Wilderness Act of 1964: (1) an area where the earth and its community of life are untrammelled by man; (2) an area of undeveloped Federal land retaining its primeval character and influence, without permanent improvements or human habitation; (3) an area which generally appears to have been affected primarily by the forces of nature, with the imprint of man's work substantially unnoticeable; (4) an area which has outstanding opportunities for solitude or a primitive and confined type of recreation; (5) an area which has at least 5,000 acres of land, or is of sufficient size to make practical its preservation and use in an unimpaired condition; and (6) an area which may also contain ecological, geological, or other features of scientific, educational, scenic, or historical value.

The Wilderness Inventory Program in the California Desert began in May 1978 and is scheduled for completion in February 1979. Completion of the California Desert Plan, September 30, 1980, will result in recommendations on those areas which have been determined to be suitable or unsuitable for inclusion in the National Wilderness Preservation System. Decisions on inclusion will be made by the Congress after further study.

Numerous public and organizational meetings have been conducted during the inventory period. During May 1978, 17 public meetings were held statewide to explain the procedures which would be followed during the inventory phase. Each of these meetings was followed, the next day,

by a workshop where specific areas on the Preliminary Inventory Map were discussed. A 45-day public review and comment period followed the initial public meetings, during which time the public was encouraged to provide the Wilderness Inventory team with input for inclusion in an Interim Inventory Map published in August.

Team members divided the Conservation Area into numbered roadless polygons and conducted on-the-ground checks in each, developing descriptive narratives on findings and rationales. Another series of workshops was conducted in August, after publication of the Interim Inventory Map, to permit public comment and discussion of the proposed Wilderness Study Areas. This was part of the 30-day review and comment period provided after map publication.

A Draft Wilderness Inventory Map of the California Desert Conservation Area is scheduled for release in November, followed by a 90-day public review and comment period during which public meetings will be conducted statewide to receive formal comments.

A Final Wilderness Inventory Map will include comments on the Draft and will be published in February 1979.