

Upper McCoy

Description/Location: The Upper McCoy area is bordered on three sides by the Palen-McCoy Wilderness. The area is currently managed as the Upper McCoy Multi-species Wildlife Habitat Management Area (WHMA) and as a Bighorn Sheep WHMA under the Northern and Eastern Colorado Desert Coordinated Management (NECO) Plan.

Nationally Significant Values:

Ecological: The proposed unit is a vast and remote area, surrounded on three sides by the Palen-McCoy Wilderness. It is the watershed for the Midland Ironwood Forest, which is a significant feature of the Palen-McCoy Wilderness. The area also contains the Palen Pass Huge Ironwood Trees, an Unusual Plant Assemblage (UPA) that was identified in the 1980 California Desert Conservation Area Plan. The Midland Ironwood Forest, along with the Palen Pass Huge Ironwood Trees UPA, comprises one of the largest ironwood woodlands in the Sonoran Desert, both in terms of the extent of the woodland and the size of the individual trees. The proposed NLCS unit would contribute to the overall linking of five currently isolated Wilderness Areas of northeastern Riverside County (i.e., Palen-McCoy, Big Maria Mountains, Little Maria Mountains, Riverside Mountains, and Rice Valley wildernesses) with each other and Joshua Tree National Park, and would protect a large, intact representation of the lower Colorado Desert. Along with the proposed Chuckwalla Chemehuevi Tortoise Linkage NLCS/ ACEC and Palen-Ford NLCS/ ACEC, this unit would provide crucial habitat connectivity for key wildlife species including the federally threatened Agassizi's desert tortoise and the desert bighorn sheep. Protecting this proposed NLCS unit would be crucial for maintaining habitat connectivity between the Chuckwalla and Chemehuevi critical habitat units, the two main desert tortoise population centers in the Colorado Desert.

Cultural: The military used this area between narrowly separated mountain ranges heavily during WWII as part of the Desert Training Center. The area features numerous historic archaeological sites, features, and very likely unexploded ordnance as well. Water sources in natural tanks along the flanks of the Mountains are likely the reasons for the existence of prehistoric archaeological sites including petroglyphs, cleared circles, pot drops, groundstone artifacts, and trail segments. Due to the dearth of previous archaeological investigations in the area the current level of knowledge of the prehistoric past is lacking with regard to the amount of preserved sites known.

Scientific Values: The rich archaeological deposits have the potential to reveal much about the lives of aboriginal peoples, previous climate patterns, and early environments of the late prehistoric era back to the late Pleistocene. The potential for Pleistocene paleontological discoveries has been elevated recently due to discoveries from nearby investigations.

Special Designations/ Management Plan/ Date: newly proposed ACEC, Palen Pass Huge Ironwood Trees Unusual Plant Assemblage (CDCA Plan 1980), Upper McCoy Wildlife Habitat Management Area (NECO 2002)

Relevant and Importance Criteria: Relevant biological resources. The proposed ACEC is in an area of higher value desert tortoise habitat in northeastern Riverside County. It would provide critical desert tortoise habitat connectivity between the two major desert tortoise populations identified in the Colorado Desert (e.g., the Chuckwalla and Chemehuevi populations). The area contains the Palen Pass Huge Ironwood Trees, which comprise an Unusual Plant Assemblage (UPA) identified in the 1980 California Desert Conservation Area Plan. The area contains bighorn sheep demes and corridors (demes and corridors in the Granite, Palen, and Little Maria mountains). This vast area is surrounded on three sides by Wilderness, giving it a remote and pristine feel. It is the watershed for the Midland Ironwood Forest within the Palen-McCoy Wilderness. The Palen Pass Huge Ironwood Trees are one of the largest ironwood woodlands in the Sonoran Desert,

both in terms of the extent of the woodlands and the size of the individual.

Goals: Protect biological and cultural resources. Maintain bighorn sheep demes and corridors. Bighorn Sheep management goals and objectives are described in Section 2.3.1 in the NECO Plan. Protect higher value desert tortoise habitat and ensure that desert tortoise connectivity is maintained. Protect the watershed for the Palen Pass Huge Ironwood Trees within the Palen-McCoy Wilderness. Protect cultural resources associated with the Desert Training Center and the abundance of prehistoric resources.

Designation and Acreage by Alternative:

Alternative	BLM Acres of NLCS within ACEC or Wildlife Allocation	BLM Acres within ACEC	BLM Acres within Wildlife Allocation	ACEC Disturbance Cap
No Action	0	0	0	NA
Preferred Alternative	37,300	37,300	0	1%
1	29,600	0	37,300	Wildlife Allocation
2	37,300	37,300	0	0.25%
3	37,300	37,300	0	1%
4	37,300	37,300	0	1%

* Acreage values are for BLM managed lands

Alternatives:

Under All Action Alternatives, except Alternative 1—This area would be identified as an ACEC and would be managed to support and maintain wildlife connectivity.

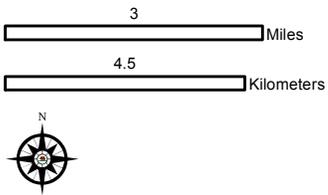
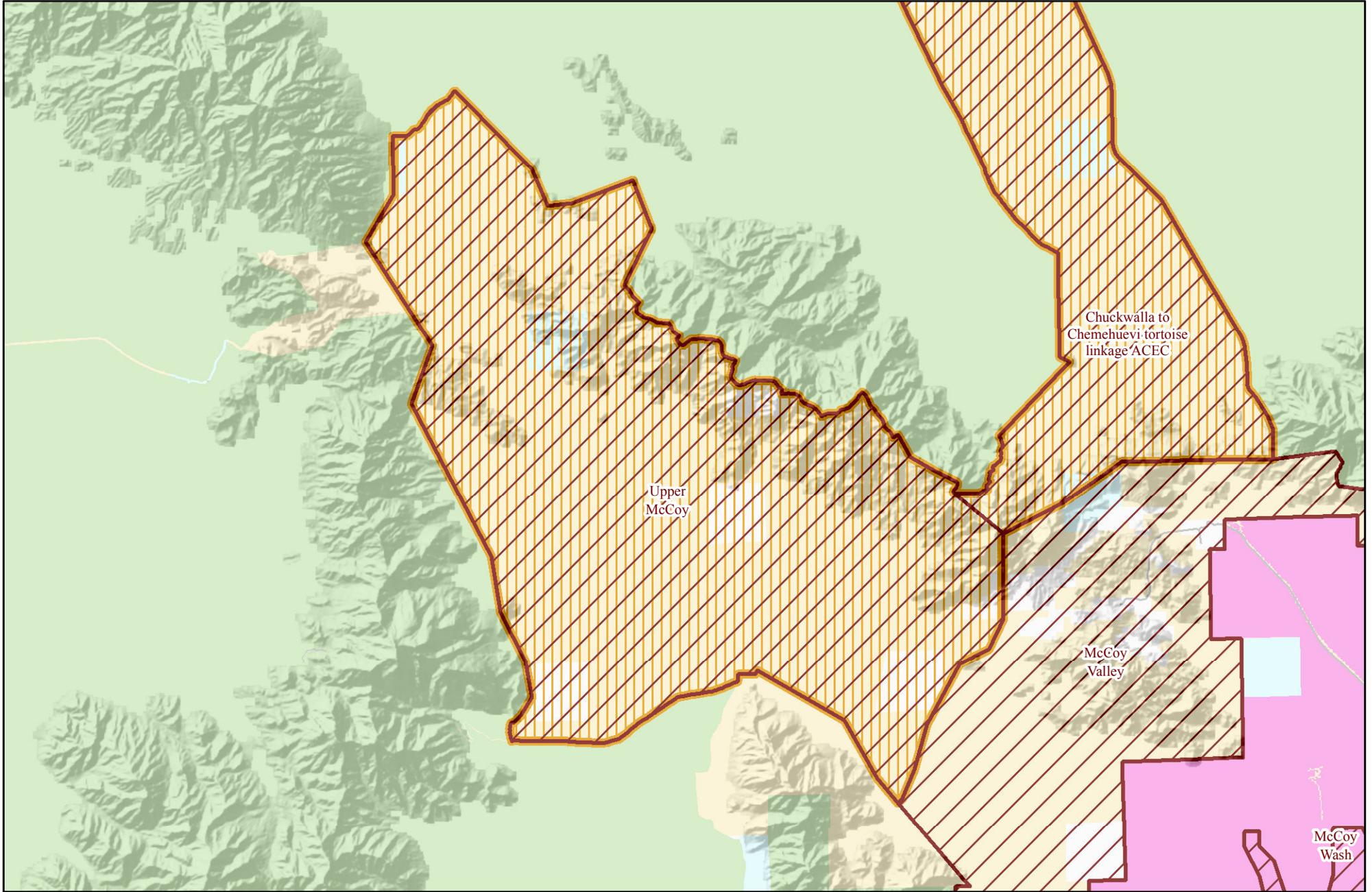
Under Alternative 1- This conservation area would be designated as a Wildlife Allocation and managed to support and maintain wildlife connectivity.

No Action – this conservation area would not exist, as it does not exist currently. The UPA would still be conserved and the WHMA would still be managed.

Objectives (desired future conditions)/Allowable Uses/Management Actions	Resource
Objective: Prevent excessive ground water withdrawal that would potentially threaten desert dry wash woodland vegetation. Action: Allow no activities on BLM public lands that would create a water basin deficit/ decline.	Soil, water, air
Objective: Protect the Palen Pass Huge Ironwood Trees, which is an Unusual Plant Assemblage and the watershed for the Midland Ironwood Forest within the Palen-McCoy Wilderness. Action: Prohibit woodcutting of any kind. Develop a silviculture plan to ensure that young trees are regenerating to sustain the woodland into the future. Foxtail Cactus (<i>Escobaria vivipara</i> var. <i>alversonii</i>) [CNPS 4.3] is the one	Vegetation (incl. special status species)

definitively known special status plant species from this area, although the flora of the area is poorly documented.	
<p>Objective: Protect habitat for desert tortoises and maintain habitat connectivity. This area contains higher quality habitat for the desert tortoise and is within a critical connectivity area between the Chemehuevi and Chuckwalla desert tortoise critical habitat units/ Desert Wildlife Management Areas.</p> <p>Objective: Maintain bighorn sheep demes and corridors. Bighorn sheep management goals and objectives are described in Section 2.3.1 in the NECO Plan.</p> <p>Objective: Protect habitat for other special status animal species, including the prairie falcon and golden eagle. The area is known foraging habitat for prairie falcons and golden eagles nesting in the adjacent mountains.</p>	Fish and Wildlife (incl. special status species)
<p>Objective: This vast area is surrounded on three sides by Wilderness, giving it a remote and pristine feel. The area will be managed as VRM II.</p> <p>Action: Restore all undesignated OHV routes to meet VRM class II objectives.</p>	Visual Resources
Objective: Area would be managed within the Eastern Riverside Extensive Recreation Management Area (ERMA). Provide dispersed opportunities focused on enjoyment of the ACEC qualities.	Recreation
<p>Objective: Consolidate management</p> <p>Management Action: Acquire all inholdings from willing sellers</p>	Land Tenure
Lands with Wilderness Characteristics (LWC) within the NLCS/ ACEC unit would be ROW exclusion areas. All other areas in the NLCS/ ACEC would be ROW avoidance areas. ROWs in avoidance areas would be authorized on a case-by case basis to meet demand consistent with the goals and objectives of the NLCS/ ACEC. All relevant and importance values of the NLCS/ ACEC must be protected. For all avoidance areas within the NLCS/ ACEC, ROW development and land use authorizations must ensure full protection, or be fully mitigated.	Rights of Way
<p>Not an allowable use. Renewable energy development is not compatible with NLCS and ACEC unit values and criteria</p> <p>Geothermal: Area is closed to geothermal leasing and development</p>	Renewable Energy
<p>Recommend withdrawal of the NLCS/ ACEC from locatable mineral entry.</p> <p>Continue to allow mineral material disposals on a case by-case basis outside of woodland habitats and subject to site specific environmental analysis. Allow no disposal of mineral material in Lands with Wilderness Characteristics.</p> <p>No-surface occupancy leasable minerals.</p>	<p>Locatable Minerals</p> <p>Mineral Materials</p> <p>Non-energy Leaseables</p>

Upper McCoy



Preferred Alternative ACECs

Date Printed: 5/29/2013

Prepared by BLM California State Office



ACEC Layers

- Existing ACEC
- Proposed ACEC
- Proposed NLCS
- Design Focus Areas
- Legislatively and Legally Protected

- Cities
- OHV Areas
- CDCA Boundary
- DRECP Boundary
- BLM Field Office

Land Status

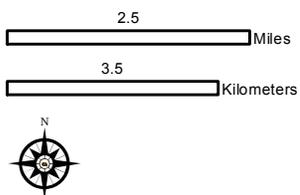
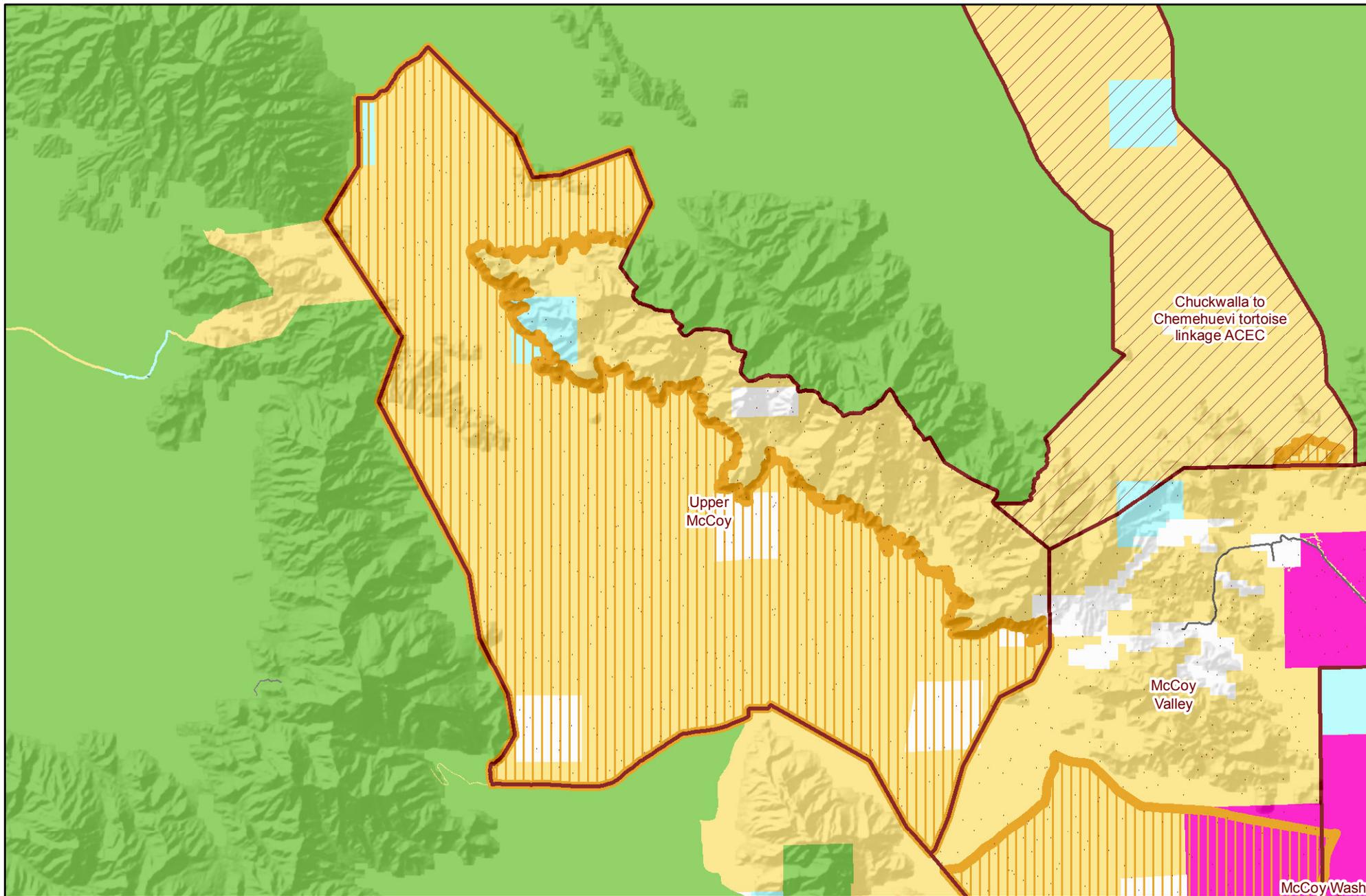
- Bureau of Land Management
- State
- Other Federal
- Military
- Private

GTLF

- Interstate
- US Hwy
- CA Hwy
- County Hwy



Upper McCoy



Alternative 1 ACECs
 Date Printed: 7/25/2014
 Prepared by BLM California State Office



ACEC Layers

- Existing ACEC
- Proposed NLCS
- Proposed ACEC
- Proposed Wildlife Allocation
- Legislatively and Legally Protected

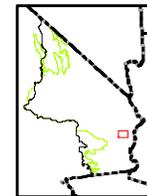
- Design Focus Areas
- OHV Areas
- CDCA Boundary
- DRECP Boundary
- BLM Field Office

Land Status

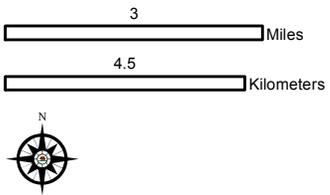
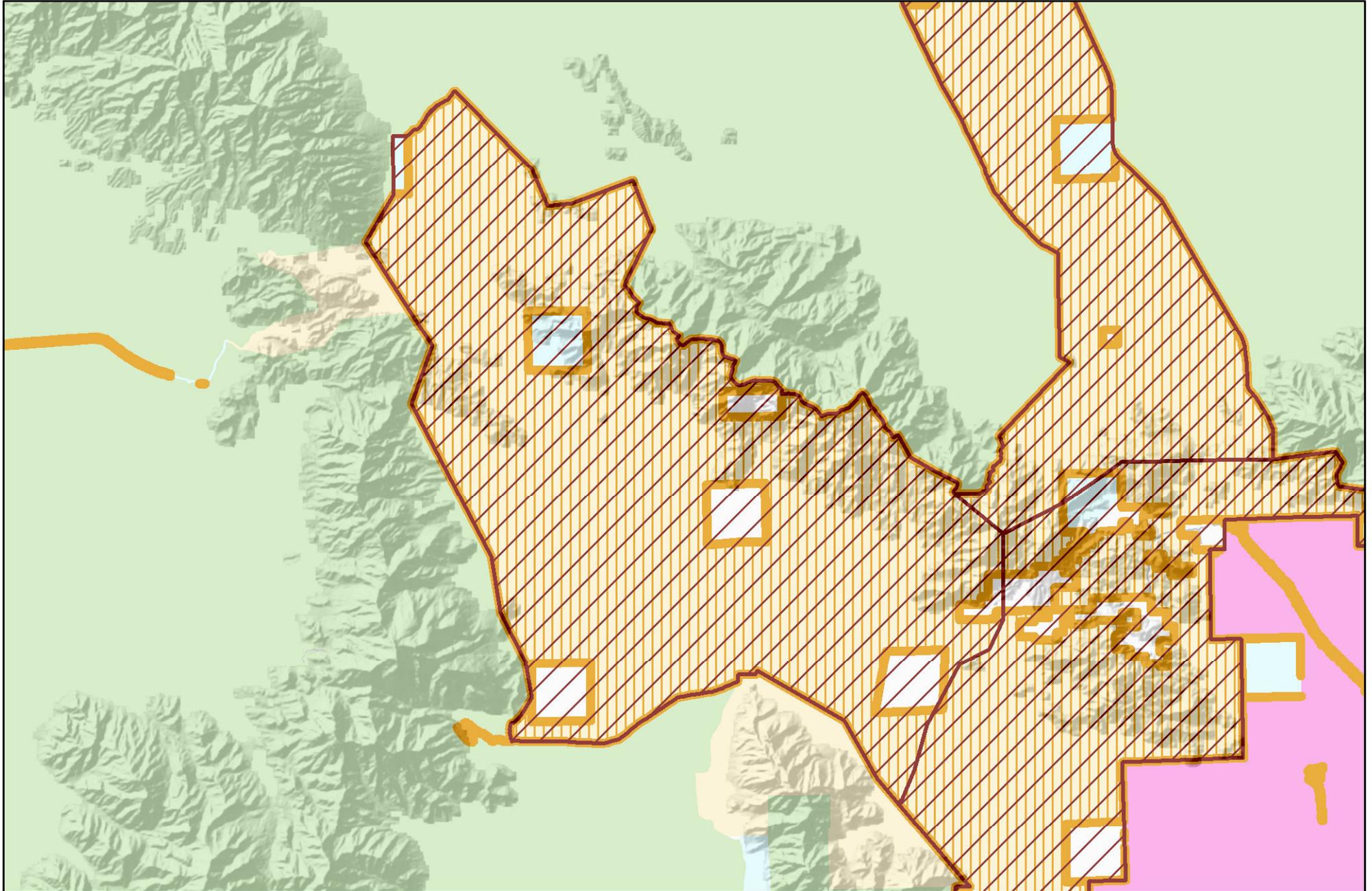
- Bureau of Land Management
- State
- Other Federal
- Military
- Private

GTLF

- Interstate
- US Hwy
- CA Hwy
- County Hwy



Upper McCoy



Alternative 2 ACECs
 Date Printed: 5/29/2013
 Prepared by BLM California State Office



ACEC Layers

- Existing ACEC
- Proposed ACEC
- Proposed NLCS
- Design Focus Areas
- Legislatively and Legally Protected

- Cities
- OHV Areas
- CDCA Boundary
- DRECP Boundary
- BLM Field Office

Land Status

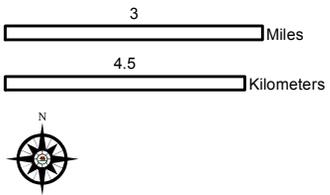
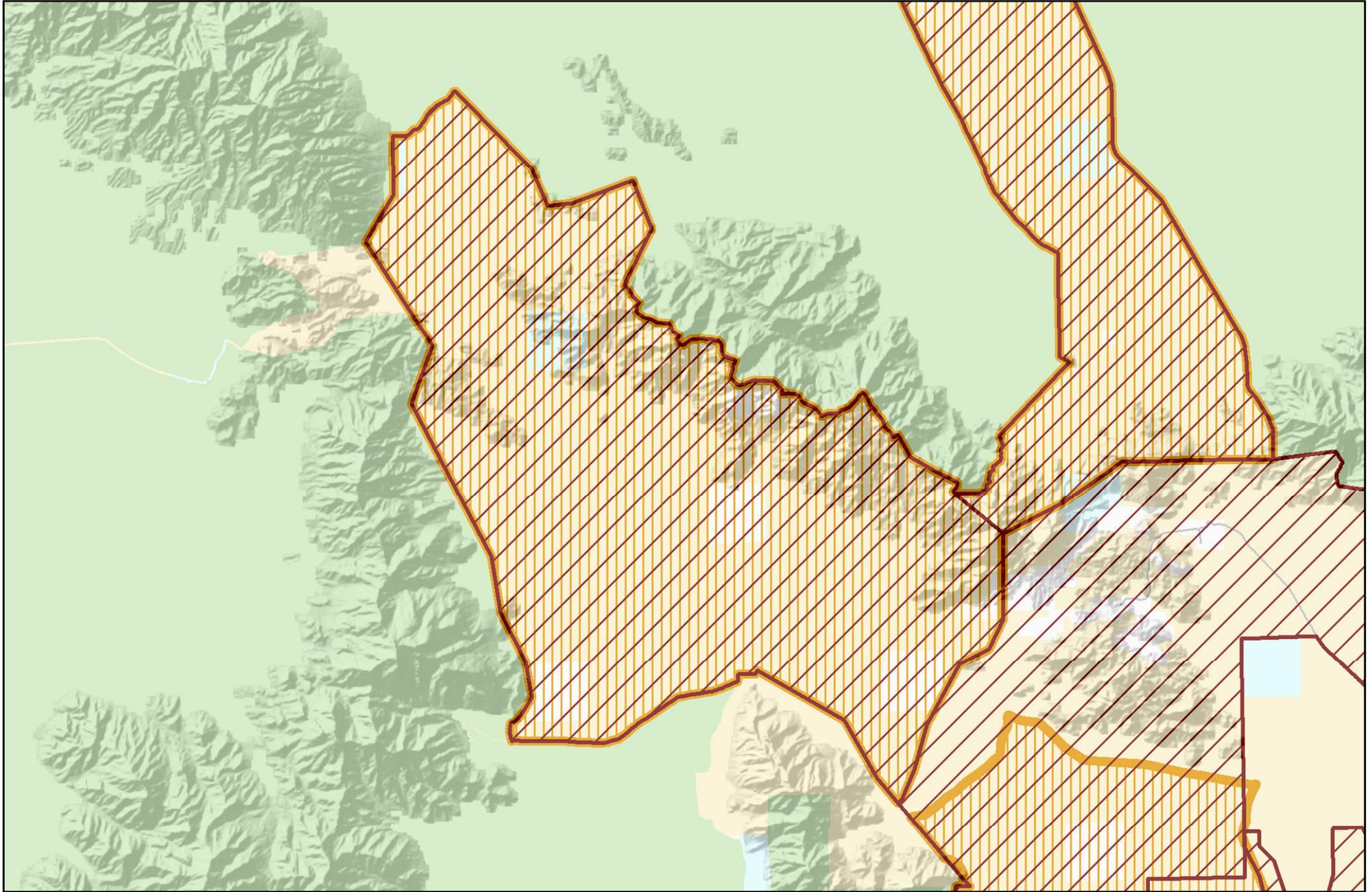
- Bureau of Land Management
- State
- Other Federal
- Military
- Private

GTLF

- Interstate
- US Hwy
- CA Hwy
- County Hwy



Upper McCoy



Alternative 3 ACECs
 Date Printed: 5/29/2013
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ACEC Layers

- Existing ACEC
- Proposed ACEC
- Proposed NLCS
- Design Focus Areas
- Legislatively and Legally Protected

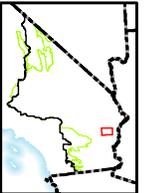
- Cities
- OHV Areas
- CDCA Boundary
- DRECP Boundary
- BLM Field Office

Land Status

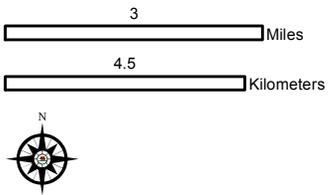
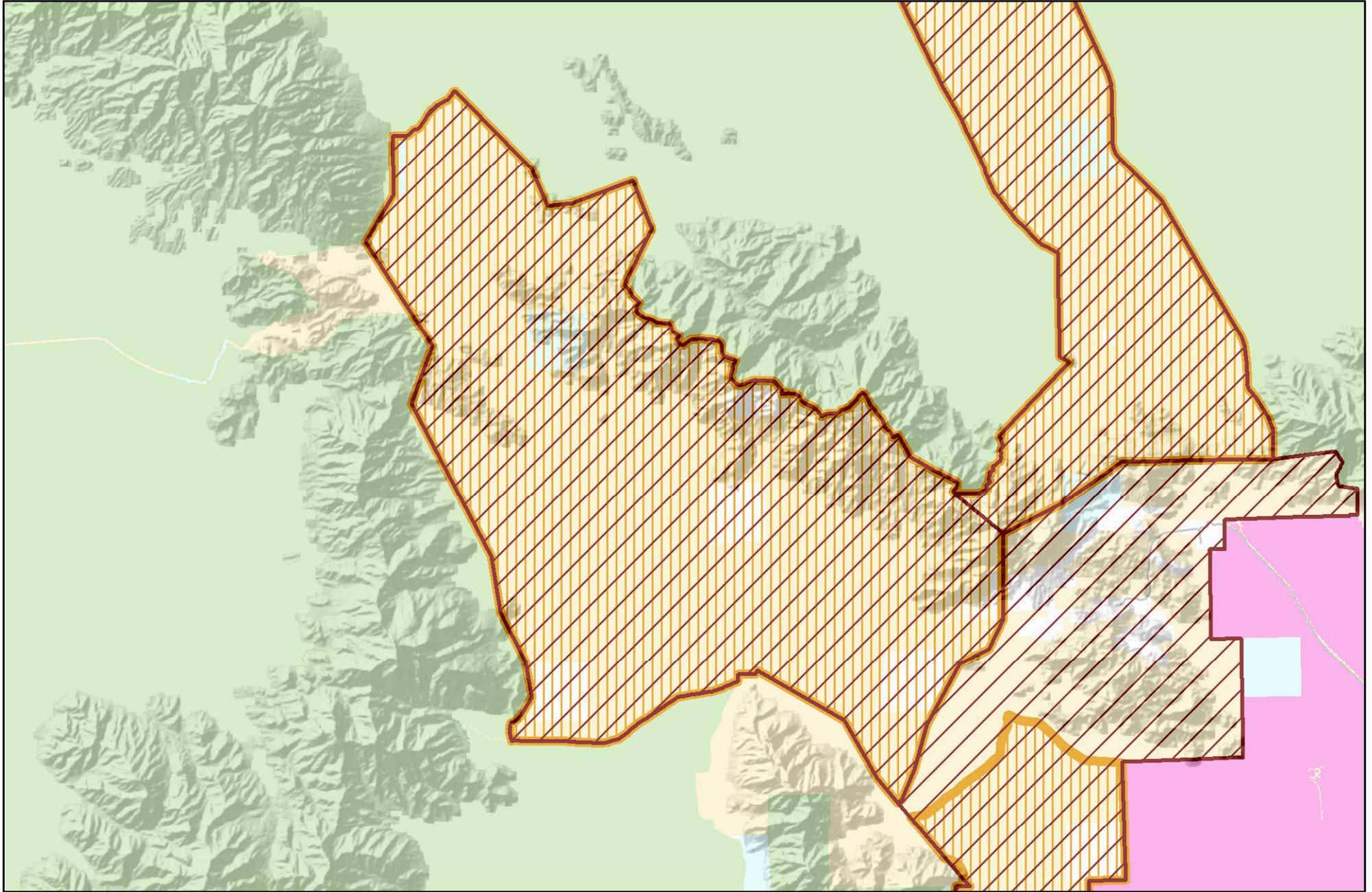
- Bureau of Land Management
- State
- Other Federal
- Military
- Private

GTLF

- Interstate
- US Hwy
- CA Hwy
- County Hwy



Upper McCoy



Alternative 4 ACECs
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ACEC Layers

- Existing ACEC
- Proposed ACEC
- Proposed NLCS
- Design Focus Areas
- Legislatively and Legally Protected

- Cities
- OHV Areas
- CDCA Boundary
- DRECP Boundary
- BLM Field Office

Land Status

- Bureau of Land Management
- State
- Other Federal
- Military
- Private

GTLF

- Interstate
- US Hwy
- CA Hwy
- County Hwy

