Afton Canyon Special Recreation Management Area (SRMA)

RMA/RECREATION MANAGEMENT ZONE (RMZ) OBJECTIVE(S) DECISIONS

Objective Statement: Designate this area as a Special Recreation Management Area. To manage the Afton Canyon SRMA for its distinctive opportunities, such as the motorized route along the historic Mojave Road, The Old Spanish National Historic Trail, the camping opportunities at the improved campground, hiking, equestrian, and rock hounding opportunities. Management of the area preserves the unique view shed of the area, as well as the year round water source, which is of vital importance to local wildlife. A recent WEMO decision determined the surface flowing section of the Mojave River is an eligible segment of the National Wild & Scenic River System.

Activities*:* Primary activities in Afton Canyon include camping in the developed fee campground & group camp site, river play, hiking, historic Mojave Road touring, equestrian riding, bird watching, Big Horn Sheep & wildlife viewing, dark sky activities, photography, nature study, rock collecting, scenic touring, 4 x 4 exploration, geo-caching and hunting.

Experiences: Visitors frequent Afton Canyon for several non-tangible experiences centered on being outdoors. A surface flowing river in the desert is a very special place and draws people to enjoy the bountiful life & tranquil setting. Visitors also come here to relate to and understand the conditions and experiences of explorers & emigrants who settled the west; includes camping & retracing ancient and historic trails and trade routes. There are two popular emigrant grave sites near Afton Canyon, and the canyon is near the historic US Army Fort Cady, used to subdue Indians following the war with Mexico.

Benefits: Personal benefits of this setting are primarily based on the relaxing and soothing effects of being around a flowing river. Visitors come here in groups of friends and families to observe and commune with nature because the area provides an easy escape for daily life in nearby communities. The easy access from interstate 15 provides social benefits and feelings of connectedness through interpretation of this areas rich history involving major prehistoric and historic trade & transportation routes. This area provides economic and environmental benefits tied to the wide range of activities occurring here requiring specialized equipment for camping and outdoor activities. The activities here help sustain regional companies providing outdoor supplies & services; while the use of this equipment benefits the environment through visitor's appreciation of nature and the world outdoors.

RECREATION SETTING CHARACTERISTICS (RSC) DESCRIPTIONS

Physical Components: This SRMA has qualities of the landscape fitting the *Front Country Classification*. Afton Canyon is about 40 miles east of Barstow, just a few minutes from highway 15. The Mojave River meanders through the canyon along a flat sandy floor a few hundred feet wide, framed by scenic vertical walls with multiple colors & interesting features. The river flows all year long on the west side of the canyon, A thick ribbon of plants comprised of native & invasive species lines the riparian zone and supports a wide diversity of wildlife, including big horn sheep, mountain lion, badger, coyote, raptors, and numerous small mammals, reptiles, rodents & birds. There is frequent vehicle & train traffic in and through the canyon.

Social Components: The campground is popular with groups of all types, including friends, equestrian, schools, family and work. This is a popular camping site because of its location by the I15 freeway, and is regularly used by regional residents and travelers on long distance multi day camping trips. Due to the steady use and the associated effects of that use, this component is also front country.

Operational Components: This component also has front country characteristics. Access from the west into and through the canyon is on a county maintained dirt road, which also crosses the river and railroad right of way. Trains regularly run through the canyon on tracks located on private ROW across public land, including 2 trestle bridges. Staff visits this area to maintain & clean the restrooms, to monitor vehicle use, for routine ranger patrols, and as on-going work to remove tamarisk and other invasive species.

MANAGEMENT ACTIONS & ALLOWABLE USES

Manage all routes of travel as open, limited or closed, as designated in the Local TTMP.

Acres by Alternative on BLM Lands:

No Action	Preferred Alternative	1	2	3	4
0	43393	36312	36312	36312	36312

Other Programs: Renewable energy development is not an allowable use in SRMAs due to the incompatibility with the values of the SRMA. Two exceptions to this management action are: 1) geothermal development is an allowable use if a geothermal-only DFA overlays the SRMA designation and complies with a "no surface occupancy" restriction; and, 2) in the Preferred Alternatives if a DRECP variance land designation overlays the SRMA, renewable energy may be allowed on a case-by-case basis if the proposed project is found to be compatible with the specific SRMA values.

Implementation Decisions: Provide for passage of motorized vehicles along the historic Mojave Road by rerouting a portion out of the riparian area and designating the Mojave Road through Afton Canyon as open for use by all vehicles on a single route. Cooperate with the county to maintain Afton & Mojave Roads. Rehabilitate all routes not signed as open for use by motorized vehicles so that they will meet at least VRM Class II standards. Maintain existing campground at its present size as a fee use overnight camping area; maintain dry camp area on the bench west of the campground as a group camping area; maintain fencing for equestrian use; maintain fencing protecting riparian areas & controlling vehicles; develop an interpretive foot trail in canyon approximate to day use, campground & group site.

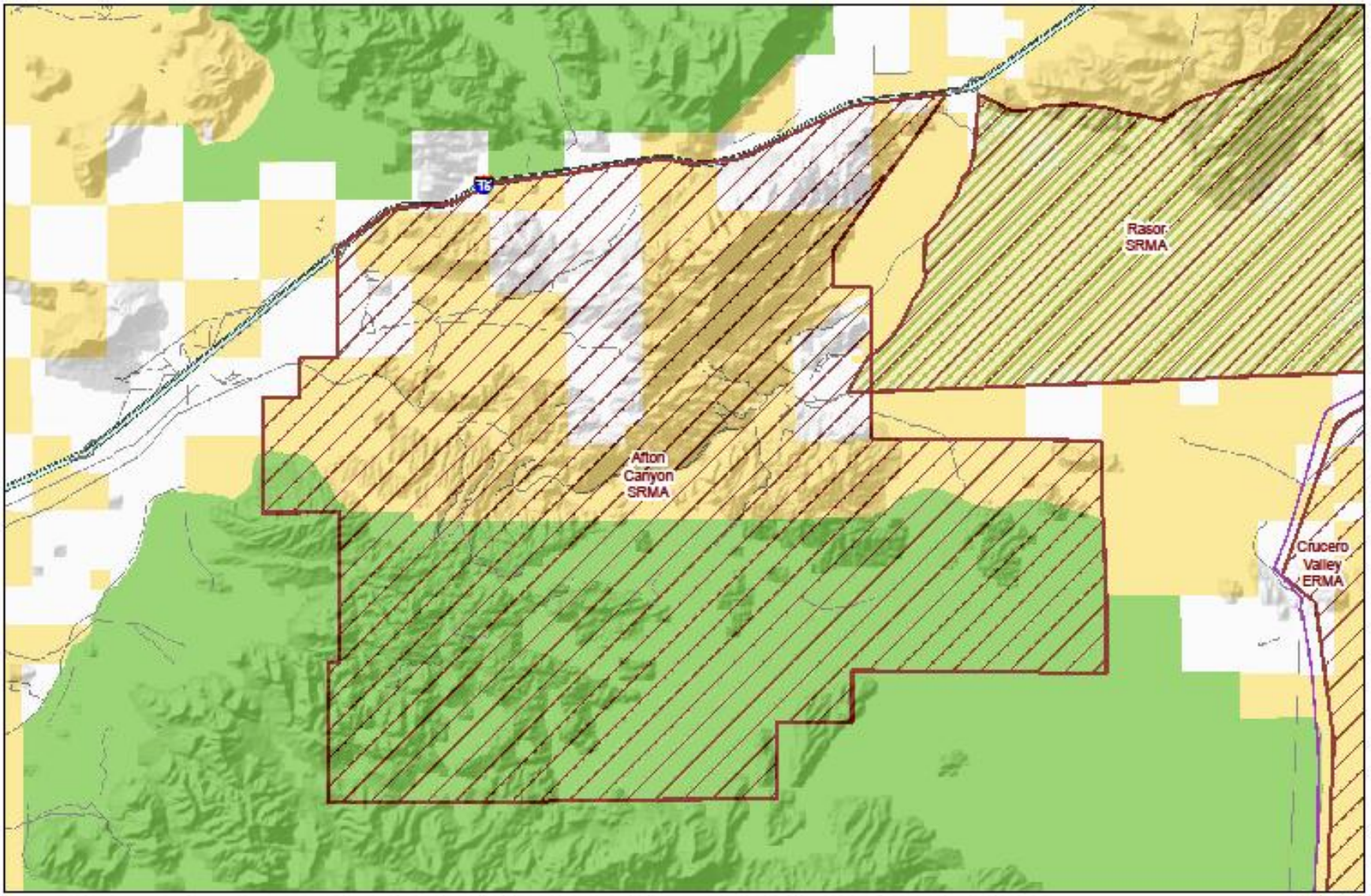
An activity level plan would be developed to identify and designate current and future recreational opportunities, appropriate facilities to provide for and manage the proposed uses, parameters for Special Recreation Permitting of events, staffing, funding, parameters for facility and road/trail maintenance, partnerships, possible recreation fee considerations, and an implementation schedule. Continue to

implement actions in the approved Afton Canyon Management Plan until a new plan is developed. Integrate the existing Afton plan philosophy in the new management prescriptions.

Mitigation:

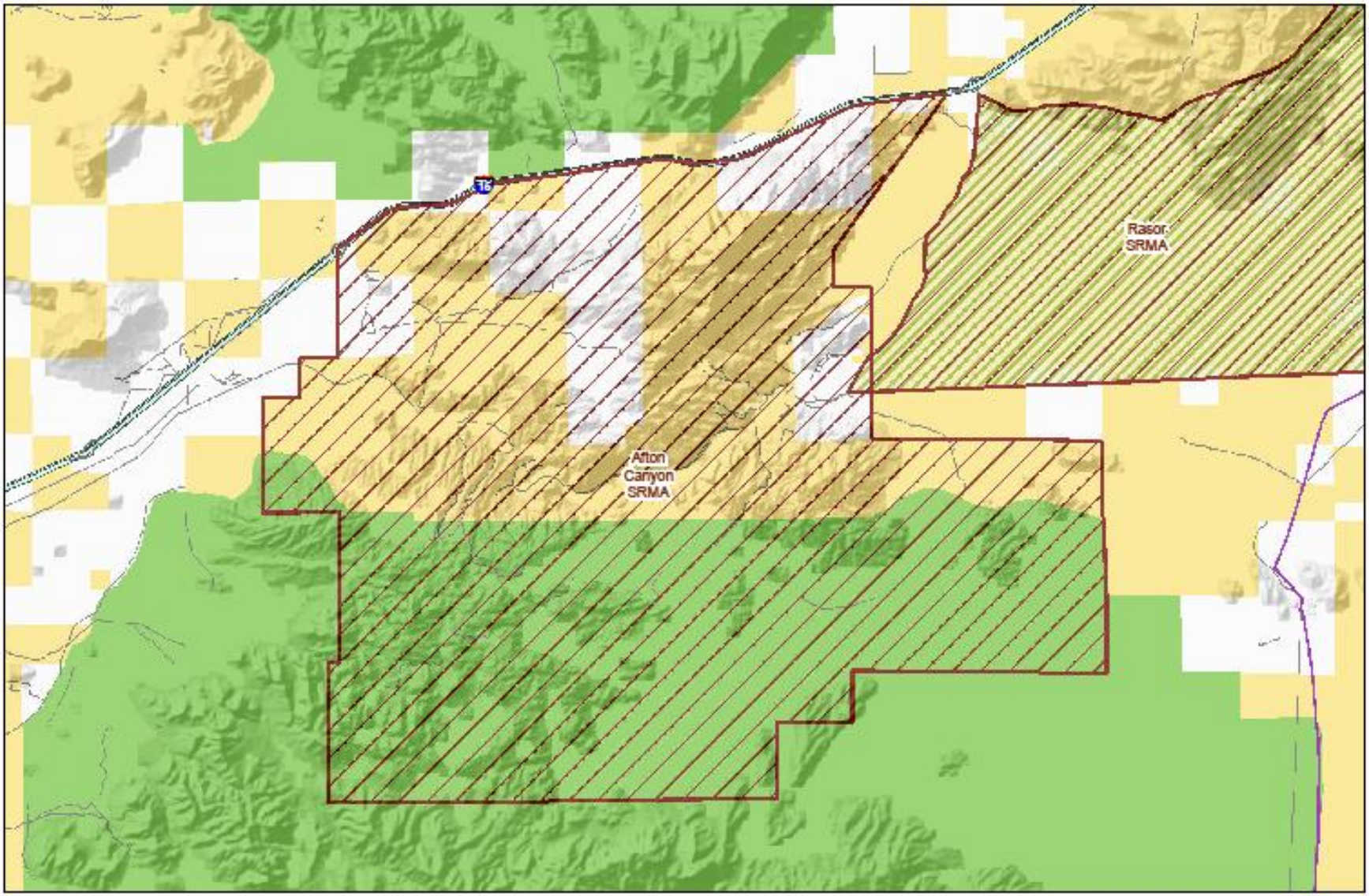
1. Maintain through traffic motorized route network connectivity with roads and trails leading into and through the Afton SRMA.
2. Manage energy projects, ROWs and similar developments on adjacent and nearby lands to avoid traffic conflicts with visitors & permitted uses.
3. Maintain access to and across the historic Mojave Road leading into and through Afton Canyon; from Highway 15 east to the Mojave Preserve.
4. Route the Mojave Road through Afton Canyon on one road available for all vehicle types, including Off-Highway Green Sticker registered vehicles.
5. Prohibit use of OHVs in the designated campground; allow their use at the group campsite and on the Mojave Road. Monitor for off-road intrusions and restore to maintain VRM class II.
6. Establish a buffer along Old Spanish National Historic Trail development exclusion zone leading into and through the Afton Canyon SRMA; centered along the approximate trail alignment as per National Historic guidelines.
7. Manage energy developments on adjacent and nearby lands to maintain dark skies.
8. Manage upstream energy development to avoid impacts to water levels in the Mojave River.
9. Establish & follow strategy for managing water, access & resource issues related to the stretch of Mojave River designated an eligible wild and scenic river in the West Mojave Plan.

Afton Canyon SRMA



The information and maps shown on this system should be used for planning purposes only. It should not be the sole source for determining map boundary locations.

Afton Canyon SRMA



2.5 Miles
3 Kilometers

Alternative 1 SRMAs

Date Printed: 6/25/2014
Prepared by BLM California State Office

ACEC Layers
- Proposed SR MA
- Design Focus Areas
- OHV Areas
- Legislatively and Legally Protected
- Cities
- 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

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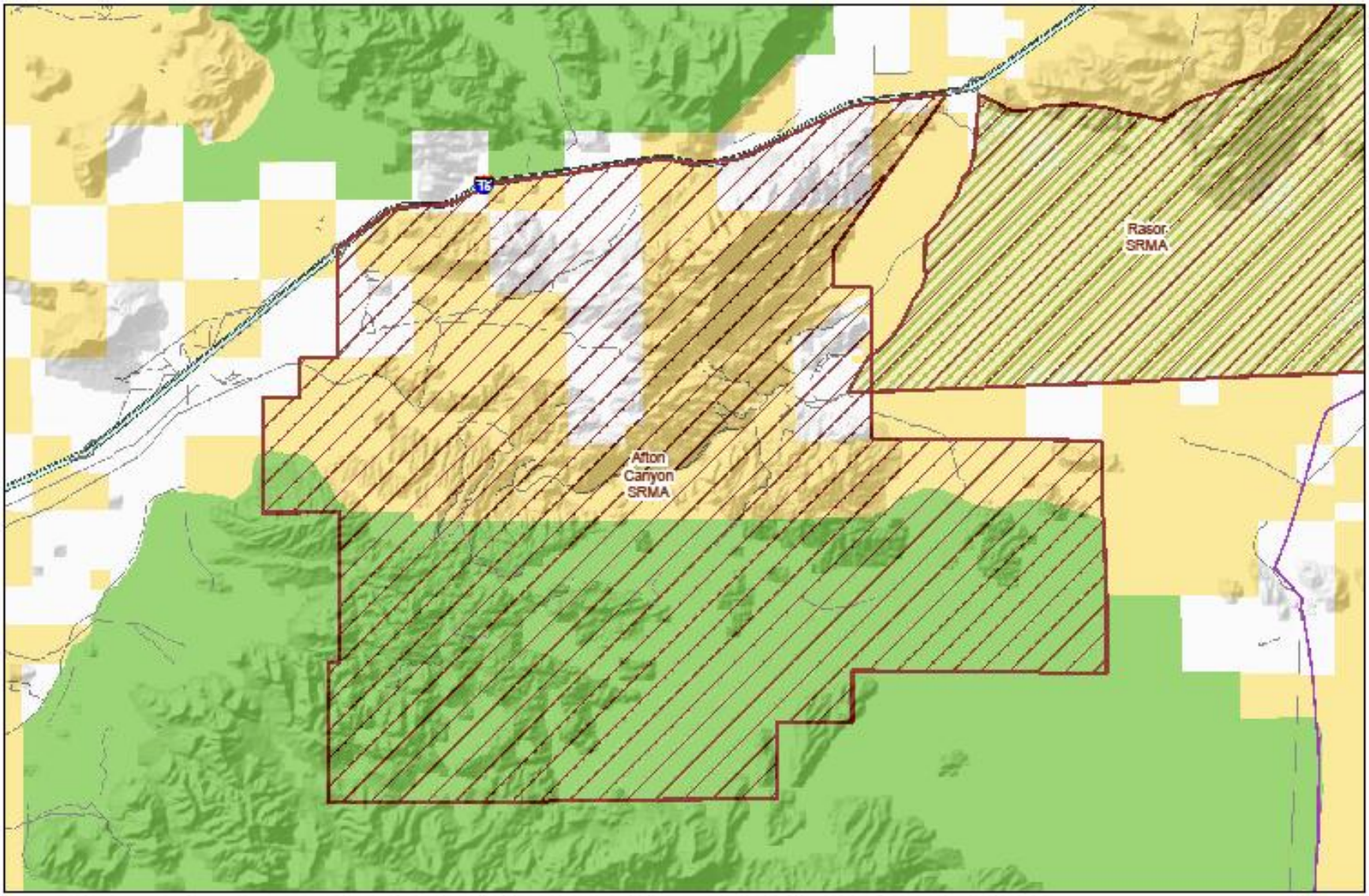

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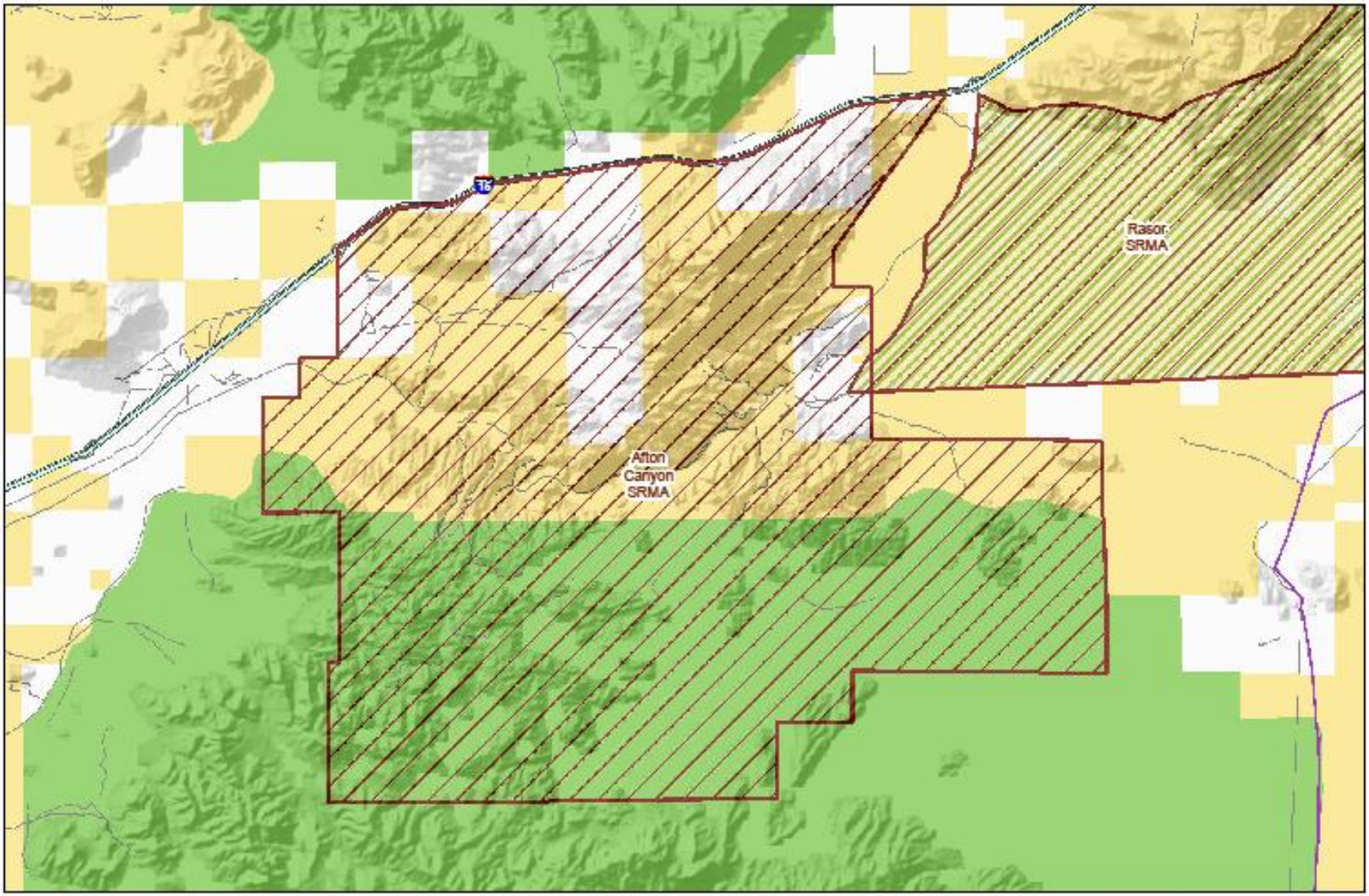

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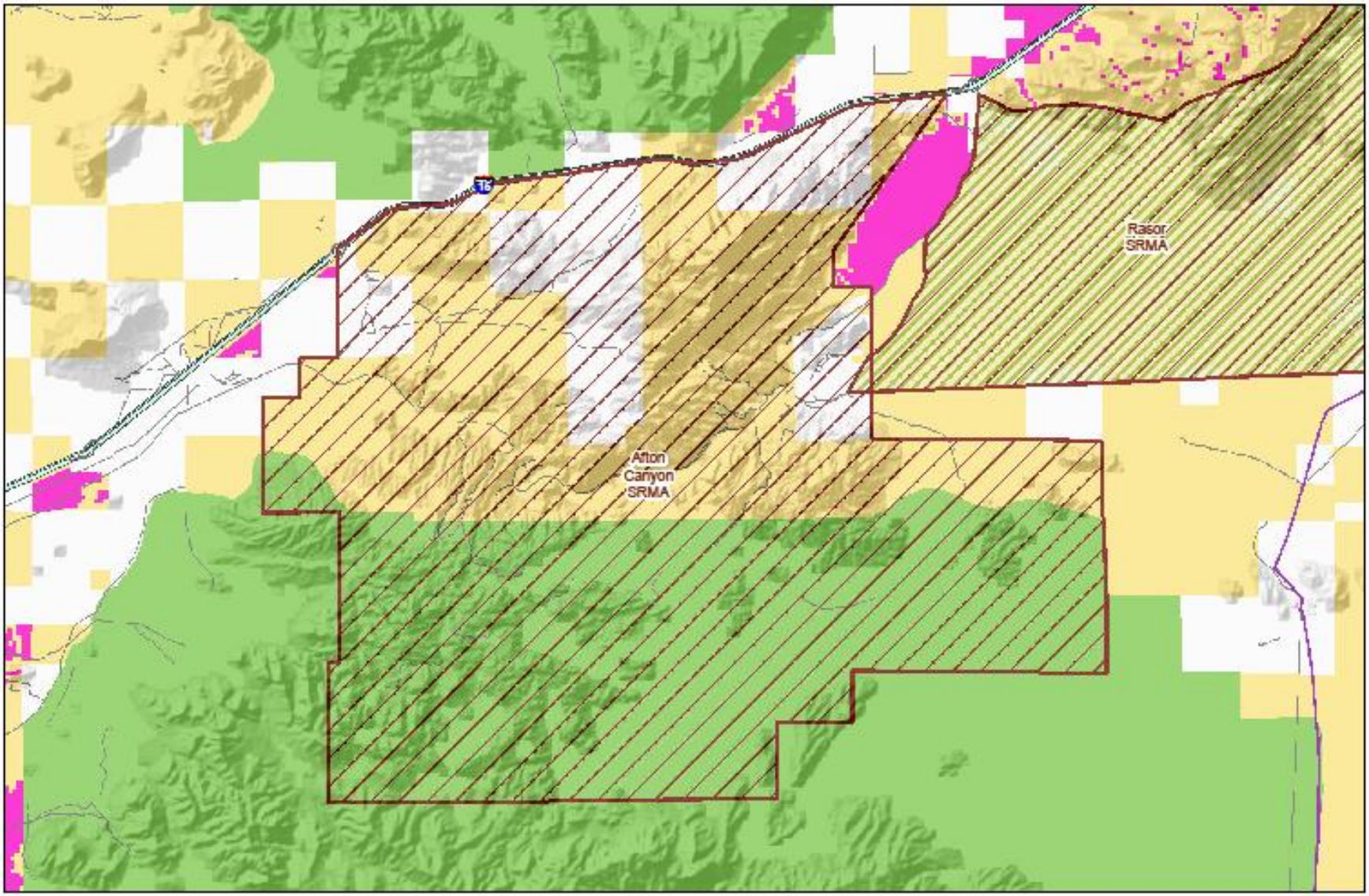

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Alternative 4 SRMAs

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