Sierra Canyons

Description/Location: This unit lays along the eastern Sierra, west of Hwy 395 between the towns of Indian Wells and Haiwee.

Nationally Significant Values:
Ecological: This flyway provides outstanding habitat for golden eagles and other raptors, with nearby cliffs for nesting and the valley floor for foraging. This area is a part of the Pacific Migratory Bird Flyway with riparian stop-over habitats. Songbirds pass through the valley on their way to breeding grounds. Shore birds migrate to Owens Lake and Mono Lake. The flyway has stop-over riparian/wetland habitat in the Sierra Nevada canyons, Little Lake, Haiwee Reservoir, Owens Lake and Mono Lake and provides a path from Mexico to Canada for certain species.

The area provides habitat for numerous special status plant species Charlotte's phacelia and Latimer's woodland gilia. These species and a broad array of additional species provide some of the most prolific and consistent wildflower blooms in the California Desert. Every spring, the Ridgecrest Wildflower Festival conducts field trips to these canyons taking visitors from across the country and abroad to these Sierra Canyons. The area also contains excellent habitat for the federally and state threatened desert tortoise.

This are offers outstanding opportunities to view a portion of the East Monache mule deer herd. As winter moves in, deer move down from the mountains to the valley bottom, at about 4,000 feet above sea level. This is the largest of the three winter ranges and runs for approximately 30 miles along the base of the Sierras between Olancha Creek and Five Mile Canyon. About 600-700 deer spend their winters here.

The area was also called out in WEMO as the "Sierra Foothills Habitat Connector" for the state threatened and BLM sensitive Mohave ground squirrel (MGS). It is a very important corridor linking MGS habitats from north to south.

Cultural: National cultural values include those sites eligible for and listed on the National Register of Historic Places. The Los Angeles Aqueduct played a vital role in the development of the Los Angeles area, sparked the California Water Wars, and has contributed to changes in water regulations and policy throughout the state. The scientific value of the area includes the potential to answer some of the most pressing questions in California archaeology, particularly about trade, human adaptation to changing environments, and culture contact and interaction.

Special Designations/Management Plan/Date: newly proposed**.**

Relevance and Importance Criteria: Relevant biological and cultural resources. The Eastern front Sierra Canyons were a critical part of the Native American seasonal round. Not only did these places have necessary water in the summer, they provided access points to the hunting grounds of the Sierra Nevada crest, sacred areas associated with mountains. They also served as conduits for trade with groups over the mountains in the Central Valley and beyond to the Coast. The North and South Units of the Sierra Canyons ACEC contain many large, prehistoric National Register of Historic Places eligible properties in relatively undisturbed contexts. These sites have high densities of obsidian and other types of lithic material unparalleled in the Ridgecrest Field Office. The sites located in these canyons have the potential to answer some of the most pressing questions in California archaeology, particularly about trade, human adaptation to changing environments, and culture contact and interaction.

The North and South Unit Sierra Canyons Conservation Area also encompass the footprint of the Los

Angeles Department of Water and Power Los Angeles Aqueduct. The first aqueduct, built in 1913, redefined the history of Owens, Rose, and Indian Wells Valleys. The First LA Aqueduct has been listed as a Historic Civil Engineering Landmark. The Aqueduct and all of the associated labor camps along the line have also been recommended eligible for the listing on the National Register of Historic Places.

The Sierra Canyons Conservation Area will provide an added layer of protection to the prehistoric, historic, and ethnographic sites associated with the Sierra Front. A management plan for this area would include restrictions to OHV routes in these areas, a harder look at proposed development, and an opportunity for scientific exploration and public interpretation.

Healthy creosote habitat supports a high variety and density of resident bird species such as the Le Conte's thrasher and loggerhead shrikes. It also includes great habitat for other sensitive species such as the BLM sensitive burrowing owl.

Goals: Protect flyway to ensure current safe passage of resident and migratory bird species in accordance with the Migratory Bird Treaty Act. Preserve and protect other sensitive biological and cultural resources in the area.

For NLCS Lands: Where this ruleset differs from the plan-wide NLCS rulesets, the more restrictive rules will apply.

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	26,900	26,900	0	1%
1	9,400	26,900	0	1%
2	21,600	21,600	0	0.25%
3	21,800	26,900	0	1%
4	14,100	26,900	0	0.25%

*** Acreage values are for BLM managed lands**

Alternatives:
Under All Alternatives—This area (size and location vary between alternatives, see table above and maps that follow) would be identified as an ACEC and would be managed for conservation purposes.

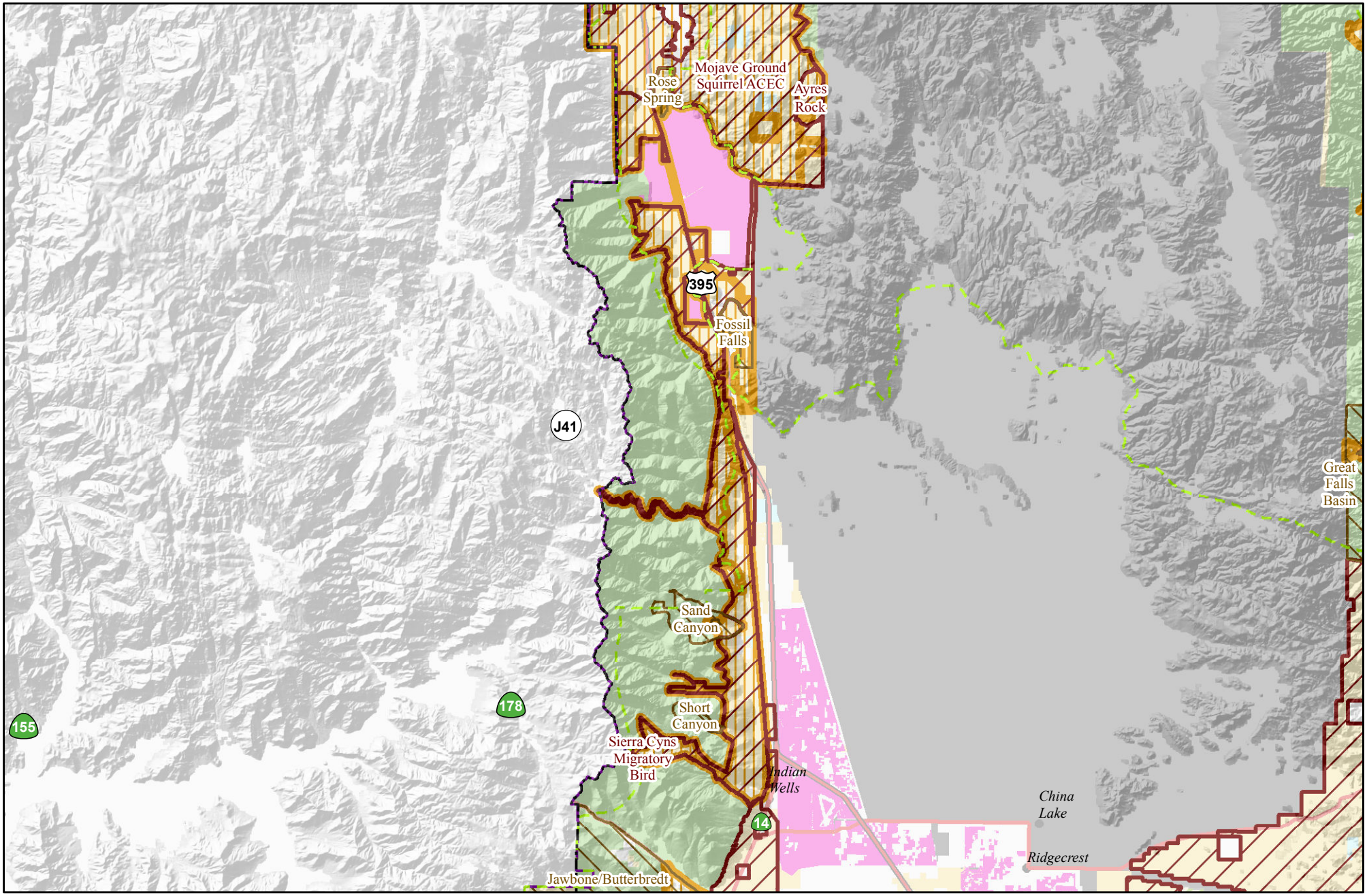
No Action – this conservation area would not exist, as it does not exist currently.

Objectives (desired future conditions)/Allowable Uses/Management Actions	Resource
Objective: Soils exhibit functional biological and physical characteristics that are appropriate to soil type, climate, and land form. Allowable Uses: Restrict construction activities when soils are susceptible to heightened risk of erosion. Management Actions: Ensure soils to meet or exceed the Soil Standard of Rangeland Health, as indicated by ground or plant cover, diversity of plant species, minimal evidence of accelerated wind and water erosion and the presence of biological soil crusts where appropriate. Objective: Protect the hydrologic flow regime in all of the canyons Allowable Uses: Existing water rights Management actions: Manage riparian/wetland vegetation, structure, and diversity and stream channels and floodplains so that they are function and achieving physical and biological objectives. Monitor Proper Functioning Condition and restore natural flow stream morphology when needed Monitor water uses	Soil, water, air
Objective: Protect the following special status plants by ensuring habitat is in a stable or improving condition to keep the species from becoming listed under the ESA. Management Actions: Protect and monitor populations of special status plants Creamy blazing star (*Mentzelia tridentata*) Latimer's woodland-gilia (*Saltuglia latimeri*) Charlotte's Phacelia (*Phacelia nashiana*) Nine Mile Canyon phacelia (*Phacelia novenmillensis*) Mojave tarplant (*Deinandra mohavensis*) Prohibit collection of plants except by permit Rehabilitate/revegetate disturbed area Management Action: Protect natural communities listed as rare by the State	Vegetation (incl. special status species)
Objective: Protect flyway to ensure current safe passage of resident and migratory bird species. Allowable Uses: Linear rows allowed with mitigation measures Management Actions: New proposals will need to be analyzed at on a case-by-case basis and cumulatively, to assess whether they can be accommodated within the ACEC and its management goals. Objective: Protect and enhance habitat to maintain stable or increasing population trends of special status species to ensure persistence: Management Action: Designate Species below as priority species for management and protection.	Fish and Wildlife (incl. special status species)

Mule Deer American Badger (*Taxidea taxus*) State Special Animal Desert Tortoise (*Gopherus agassizii*) Federally and State threatened Mohave ground squirrel (*Spermophilus mohavensis*) State threatened Yellow-eared pocket mouse (*Perognathus xanthonotus*) BLM sensitive Golden Eagle (*Aquila chrysaetos*) BLM sensitive, Bald and Golden Eagle P. Act Prairie Falcon (*Falco mexicanus)* USFWS Bird of Conservation Concern Burrowing Owl (*Athene cunicularia*) BLM Sensitive Le Conte's Thrasher *(Toxostoma lecontei)* State Species of Special Concern Loggerhead Shrike (*Lanius ludovicianus)* State Species of Special Concern Objective: Maintain quality foraging habitat for the Monache Deer Herd Management Action: Monitor to ensure diverse grasses and forbs with Rangeland Health Standards	
See programmatic ACEC cultural resources objective and action items in general cultural resources rules.	Cultural Resources
Objective: Limit vehicles to open designated routes and prevent user-created routes from developing. Allowable Uses: Motorized, non-motorized, Non-mechanized, Management Actions: Sign designated routes routinely Rehabilitate unauthorized vehicle play areas and hill climbs, particularly where off-route vehicle use is creating problems for wildlife and visual resources. Avoid designating routes in high value streams and riparian areas. Where routes need to cross streams and riparian areas, they will be managed appropriately to minimize impacts. Avoid designating routes where they are not sustainable, i.e., on steep, loose sandy and/or gravelly slopes. Attempt to re-route routes so they switch back down slopes instead of plummeting straight down. Use minimization criteria for designating routes in Mohave ground squirrel and Desert tortoise habitat. Increase information to public and LE patrols For complete description, see Eastern Sierra SRMA	Trails and Travel Management
Objective: Provide dispersed opportunities for enjoyment of the ACEC attributes. Protect sensitive riparian resources (i.e. nesting birds) and people from the risk of fire and accidental shooting Allowable Uses: All forms of recreational use are allowed including but not	Recreation

limited to dispersed camping, hunting, photography, picnicking, climbing, rock hounding, astronomy/ star gazing, nature study and viewing as long as these activities due not degrade the relevant and important values that the ACEC is being established for. Management Action: Increase information to public and LE patrols, maintain signs, vehicle barriers and kiosks, and work with volunteers to clean-up parking and camping areas on a regular basis. Impose seasonal restrictions on target shooting in sensitive riparian areas and where large numbers of people congregate to park or camp. Increase LE ranger patrols to enforce compliance with fire restrictions, camping limits, and vehicle use on the designated route system.	
Objective: Consolidate habitat management Management Action: Acquire inholdings from willing sellers	Land Tenure
Objective: Provide for existing and new ROWs while protecting the sensitive resources. Allowable Uses: Exclusion zone for site ROW, okay for linear, no ROWs that alter groundwater regimes Management Actions: New proposals will need to be analyzed at on a case-by-case basis and cumulatively, to assess whether they can be accommodated within the area and its management goals. Follow BMP for Avian Protection on transmission lines, etc.	Rights of Way
Not an allowable use. Renewable energy development is not compatible with NLCS and ACEC unit values and criteria. Geothermal: Area is closed to geothermal leasing and development	Renewable Energy
Objective: Support the national need for reliable and sustainable domestic minerals while protecting the sensitive resources in the area. Management Actions: New proposals will need to be analyzed at on a case-by-case basis and cumulatively, to assess whether they can be accommodated within the ACEC and its management goals.	Locatable Minerals Mineral Materials Non-energy Leasables
Objective: Provide for livestock grazing opportunities in a manner that limits impacts on other resources Allowable Uses: Adjust livestock use where monitoring data indicate changes are necessary to meet resource objectives. Management Actions: Manage grazing authorizations to meet or exceed the Standards for Rangeland Health.	Livestock grazing

Sierra Canyons



8.5 Miles

10 Kilometers

N

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

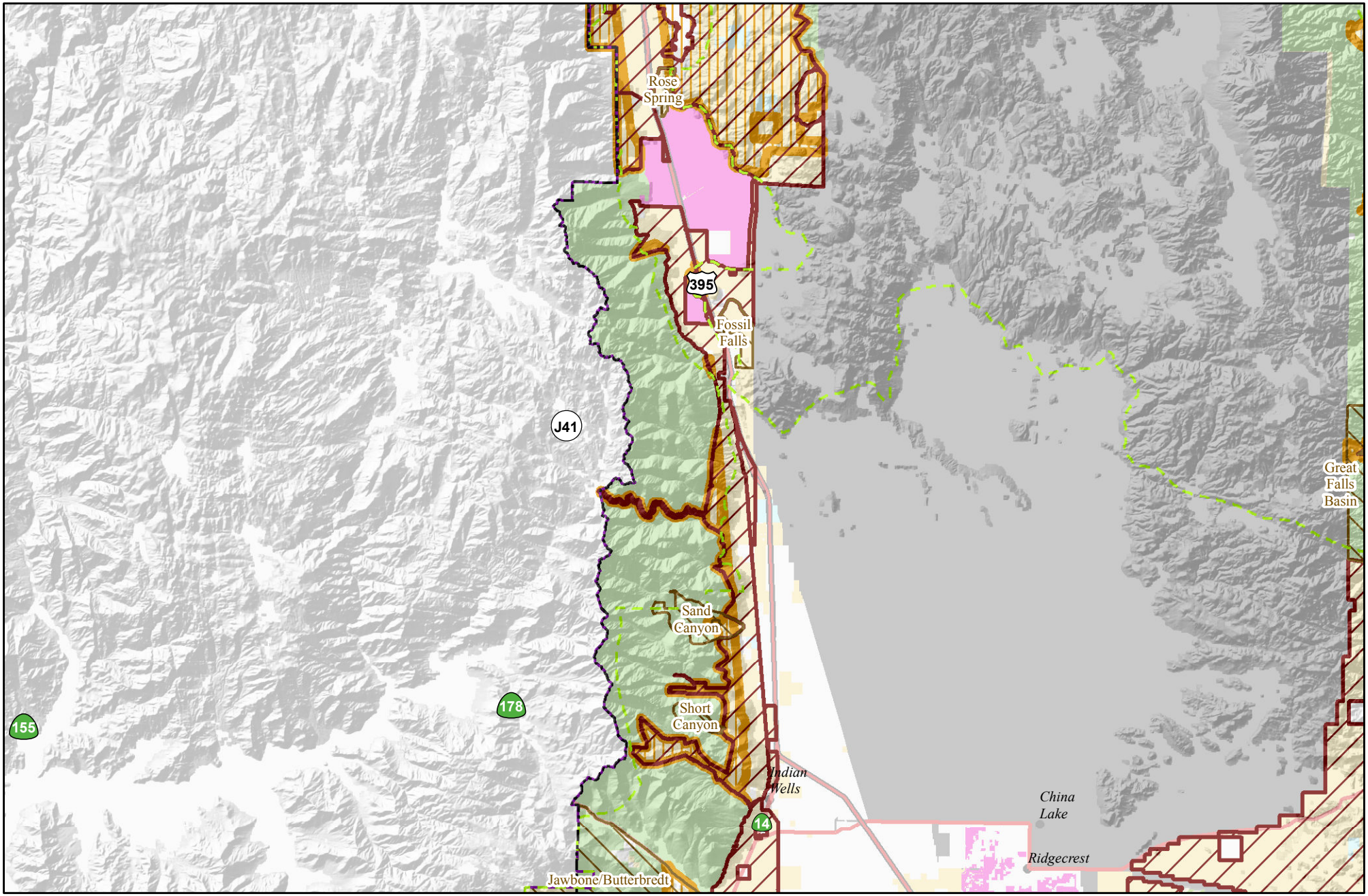
Land Status

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

GTLF

- Interstate
- US Hwy
- CA Hwy
- County Hwy

Sierra Canyons



8.5 Miles

10 Kilometers

N

Alternative 1 ACECs

Date Printed: 5/29/2013

Prepared by BLM California State Office

ACEC Layers

- Existing ACEC
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- Cities
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Land Status

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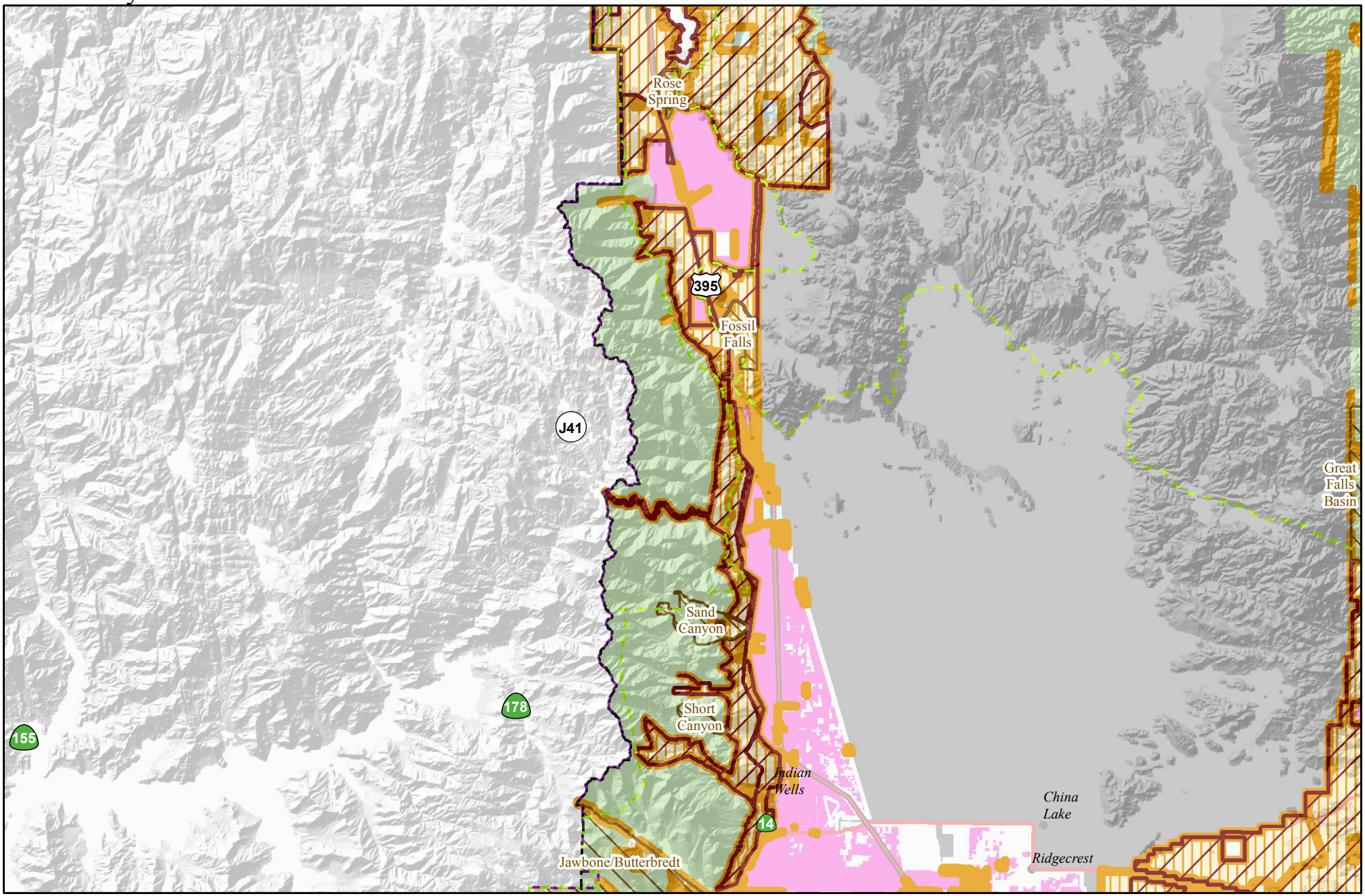
Sierra Canyons



8.5 Miles

10 Kilometers

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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

Cities
OHV Areas
CDCA Boundary
DRECP Boundary
BLM Field Office

Land Status
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GTLF
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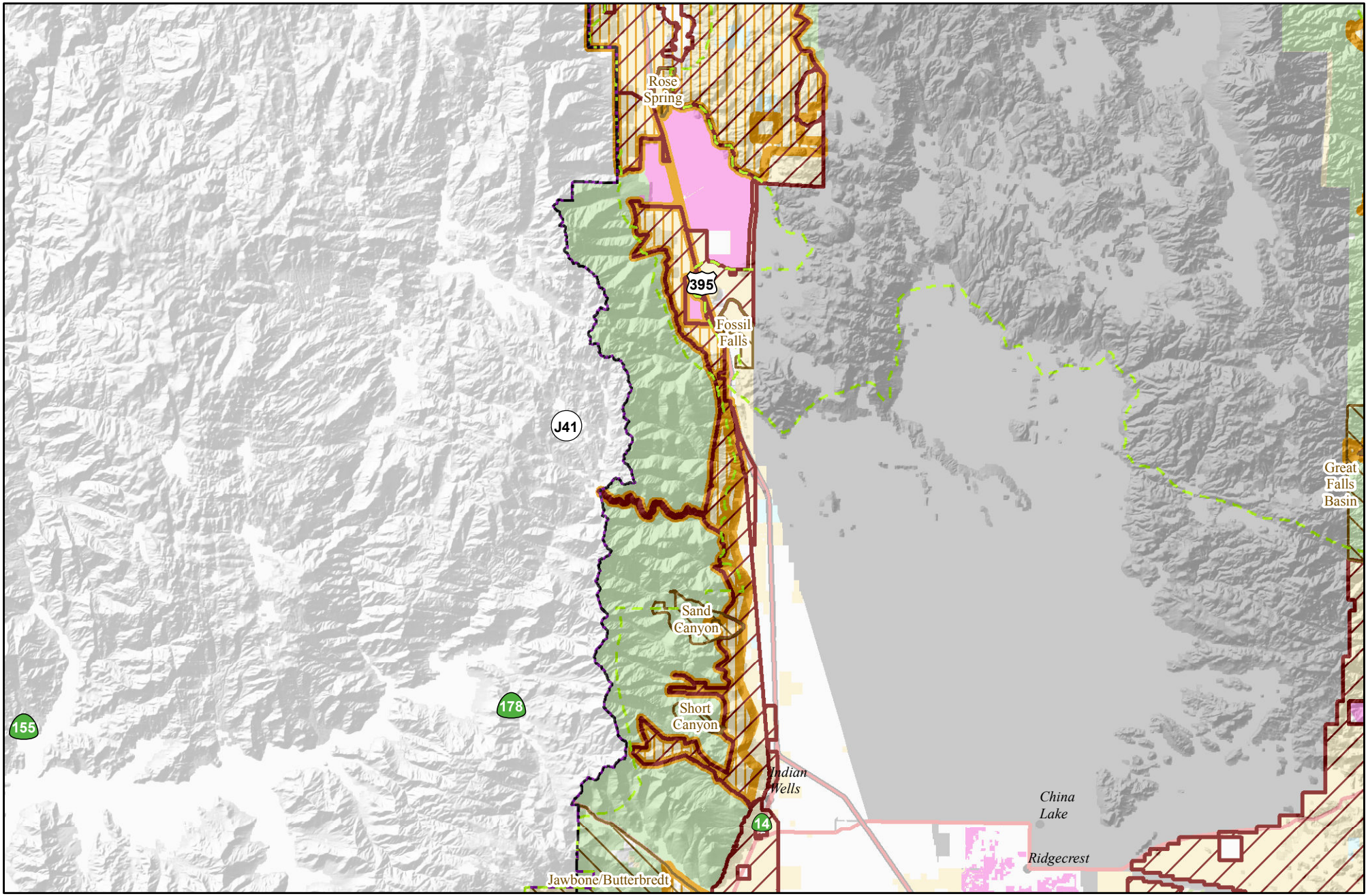
Sierra Canyons



8.5 Miles

10 Kilometers

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Alternative 3 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
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- Other Federal
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- Private

GTLF

- Interstate
- US Hwy
- CA Hwy
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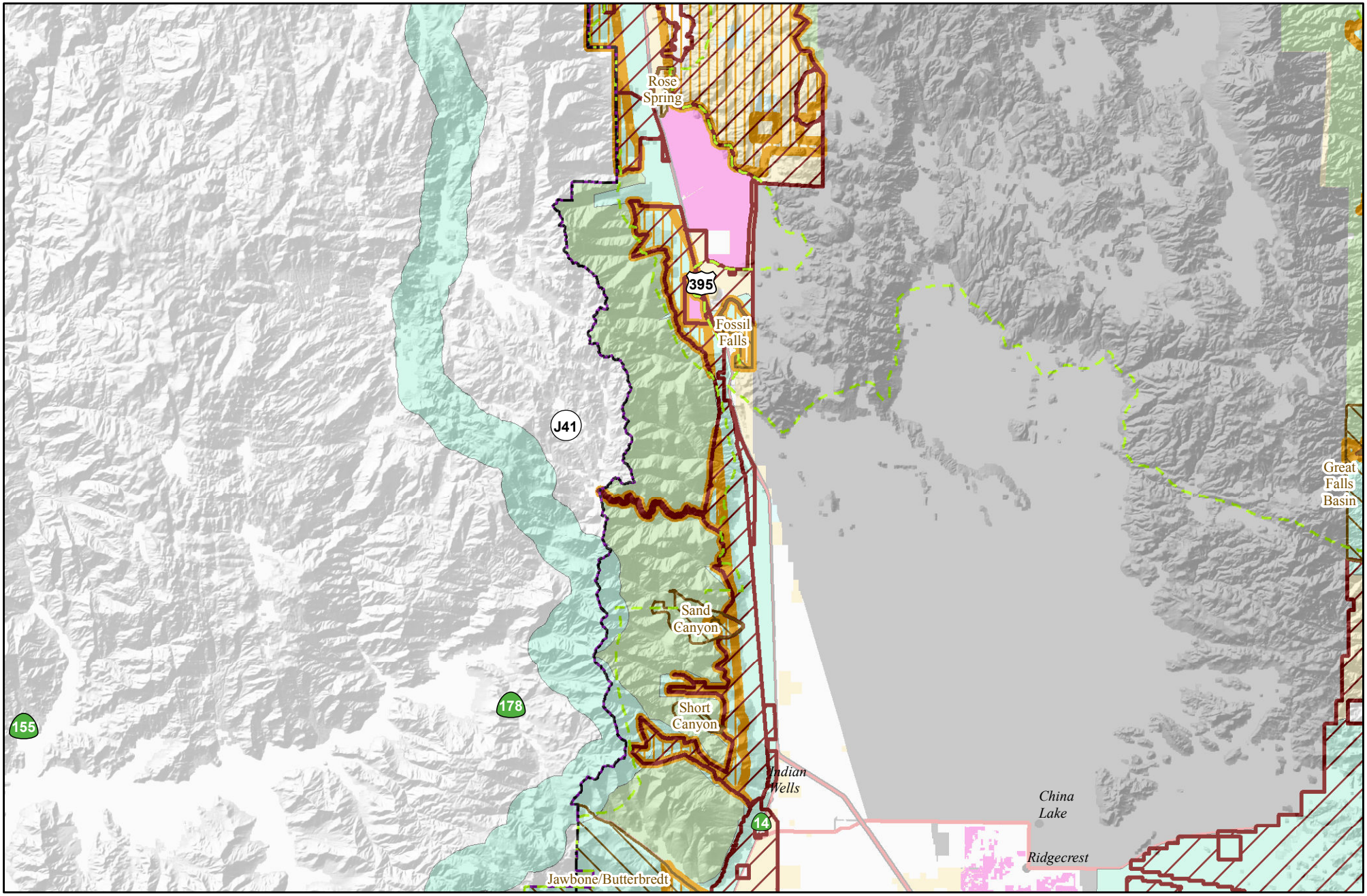
Sierra Canyons



8.5 Miles

10 Kilometers

N

Alternative 4 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
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Land Status

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- Private

GTLF

- Interstate
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- CA Hwy
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