

Eastern Sierra Special Recreation Management Area

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

Objective Statement The objective is to designate this area as a Special Recreation Management Area (SRMA). This SRMA provides a recreational environment that focuses on low impact recreation and emphasizes on experiencing the splendor of the Eastern Sierras. The goal is to offer recreational opportunities that maintain the natural character of the landscape and protect sensitive resources, while encouraging a variety of outdoor activities that provide pleasure to the user.

Activities: The primary activities for the Eastern Sierra SRMA are picnicking, camping, hunting, hiking and backpacking, horseback riding, rock climbing, bird watching, wildflower viewing, mountain biking, and scenic vehicle touring. The area provides access to multiple wilderness trailheads, including the Pacific Crest National Scenic Trail. Special recreation permits are regularly issued to groups sponsoring dual sport, equestrian, climbing, and back packing adventures. Each year Sand Canyon provides a unique outdoor classroom for 4th graders in the Ridgecrest area, through the Sand Canyon Environmental Education Program (SEEP).

Experiences: This SRMA provides a place for individuals, families, and friends to stop, rest, play, and immerse themselves in nature, in an unstructured and spectacular outdoor setting. The area is dominated by two flanking wilderness areas, the Owens Peak Wilderness and the Sacatar Trail Wilderness. These wildernesses and especially, the mountains that comprise them, the southern Sierra Nevada, provide the dramatic backdrop and framework for virtually everything that occurs here.

The Eastern Sierra SRMA is remarkable for its natural beauty and primitive, undeveloped qualities. The mountains here are comprised of a series of massive granite blocks and spires. Vegetation is highly diverse reflecting the mix of three distinct floristic provinces: Great Basin, California, and Desert. It is breathtaking to see Joshua trees, pinyon-juniper, Whipple yuccas, and grey pine all occupying the same space. This area is renowned for its impressive spring wild flower displays which can set the mountainsides ablaze with color.

There are no facilities and no developed campgrounds. Visitors are allowed to park and camp virtually anywhere along the designated vehicle route network in close proximity to wilderness. People can find an isolated place of their own, or they can assemble in larger groups at one of the many dispersed, user-created campsites found throughout the area. The operating principles are self-reliance and self-sufficiency. Visitors are left on their own to practice primitive camping skills and Leave No Trace principles. For visitors, the SRMA offers about as

close an experience as one can get in a vehicle to a classic wilderness experience, without actually being in wilderness.

Most canyons have perennial streams and riparian areas. Several popular camp sites exist along streams and in riparian areas. These areas offer water and shade, and a welcome respite from summer heat, particularly for local families. Hikers tend to favor these areas in summer as well. Bird watchers can often find migratory song birds and other species of interest here. These areas also support large numbers of doves, quails and chukar. These species are commonly hunted here in the fall.

Several long scenic vehicle touring trips are possible. Most notably, one can drive up to the top of Indian Wells Canyon from the floor of Indian Wells valley to 5400 feet, and north and south along the upper Los Angeles Aqueduct Road at elevations ranging from 3400 to 3600 feet. These drives are spectacular, with close-up views of the Sierras and panoramic views of the valley floor far below. The Aqueduct Road has great interpretative potential as the scope, scale, and history of the Los Angeles Aqueduct, an engineering marvel, is on full display.

The SRMA offers easy (vehicle) access to a popular rock climbing area known as Five Fingers and to various wilderness trail heads to other popular climbing, hiking, equestrian destinations such as the Pacific Crest Trail, School House (Heller) Rock, Morris Peak, Owens Peak, and Short, Sand, Sacatar and Portuguese canyons.

Benefits: This SRMA provides year around recreation, particularly for the residents of Inyokern and Ridgecrest. BLM estimates that up to 20,000 people may visit this area annually. Individuals seek out the SRMA to get away from cities and the stresses and pressures of modern urban life. They may seek to reconnect with nature, practice primitive skills, and experience what it means to be human in an essentially wild, natural, and undeveloped setting.

Families and friends may seek to spend quality time together undistracted by modern conveniences and indoor pursuits. The area offers exceptional hunting, climbing, hiking, touring and other opportunities that may not be available to them elsewhere.

The Sand Canyon Environmental Education Program (SEEP) encourages local school children to connect with nature, to look beyond their suburban blocks and neighborhoods to the natural world around them, and to begin to think sustainably about the future. This may be some children's first experience with the great outdoors.

On the economic side, the SRMA supports many businesses along Highway 14 and 395 and many more in the nearby communities of Inyokern, Ridgecrest, and Olancho. These businesses provide gas, food, and other goods and services in support of tourism, as well as recreational equipment. The Maturango Museum puts on a wildflower show in Ridgecrest each spring. It

relies heavily on the SRMA both for the collection of specimens to show at the museum and for promotional self-guided wildflower tours.

The area provides important and critical habitat for many species, including endemic, special status wildlife and plant species.

RECREATION SETTING CHARACTERISTICS (RSC) DESCRIPTIONS

Physical Components: The Eastern Sierra Nevada SMRA stretches north, west of and parallel to highways 14 and 395, encompassing the foot hills of the Eastern Sierras from Highway 178 north to Olancho, for a total of 46 miles. The highways fronting this SRMA have been designated Scenic Byways. The Sierras are breathtaking in their height and extent, rising more than 8800 feet in less than five miles. The rugged terrain forms an extensive network of canyons. Several of these canyons can be accessed directly from the highway via a system of improved dirt roads and primitive jeep trails. The higher one climbs the more primitive the route, the larger the mountains, the more insignificant and dwarfed one feels by the natural topography. There are no facilities other than dirt roads and primitive jeep trails. Wilderness starts where the jeep trails stop.

Social Components: The area is used most extensively by locals from the neighboring communities of Inyokern, Ridgecrest, and Olancho. This is where they go when they want to show others around and sight see, or to exercise, hike, walk their dogs, ride their horses, or hunt in the area. The Owens Peak Group of the Kern-Kaweah Chapter of the Sierra Club regularly schedules trips into the area; as do the local CNPS and Audubon chapters. In the past, BLM has approved several Boy Scout and Eagle Scout projects, most involving clean ups. These cleanups have focused on trash and graffiti removal, mostly in canyons where popular camp sites are located. Local youth are a target group for the Sand Canyon Environmental Education Program, now in its 17th year. Each year more than 475 fourth graders are introduced to the area, with the intent of developing their curiosity and respect for these lands, so they will become better stewards of it in the future. The BLM Ridgecrest Field Office would like to encourage more local ownership and participation in the management of this area, to heighten awareness and reduce the potential for vandalism and other destructive behaviors in the future.

Families on regional and cross country vacations will often stop by and visit, as will a broader range of travelers because of the area's proximity to major highways.

Operational Components: Visitor amenities are very minimal, consisting mostly of information and interpretative kiosks and brochures, established parking areas and trailheads, user-created primitive campsites, and one or two picnic tables in Sand Canyon.

MANAGEMENT ACTIONS & ALLOWABLE USES

Acres by Alternative on BLM Lands:

No Action	Preferred Alternative	1	2	3	4
0	61,784	45,716	41,757	47,749	47,749

Recreation and Visitor Services Program: Standard BLM two-week camping limits on public lands in one location are enforced. Vehicle use is limited to designated routes only. Commercial groups and/or groups larger than 50 require special use permits. Otherwise, no permits, fees, or other conditions of use apply.

Other Programs: This area has been proposed for VRM Class II and VRM Class III. A VRM Class II rating has been proposed for most of the area outside of the transmission corridor. This area extends west up the alluvial fans and up the canyons and foothills to the wilderness boundary. The objective of VRM Class II is to retain the existing character of the landscape. The level of change should be low. Management activities may be seen but should not attract attention. A VRM Class III has been proposed for the area within the transmission corridor extending east down to the highways. The objective of VRM Class III is to partially retain the existing character of the landscape. The level of change should be moderate. Management activities may attract attention but should not dominate the view.

Continue with agency natural resource multiple use management practices within the area. Allow all types of activities to occur within the area, except those with unacceptable safety concerns or degrade the environment. Develop recreation sites are withdrawn from mineral entry

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

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.

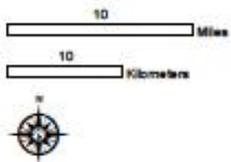
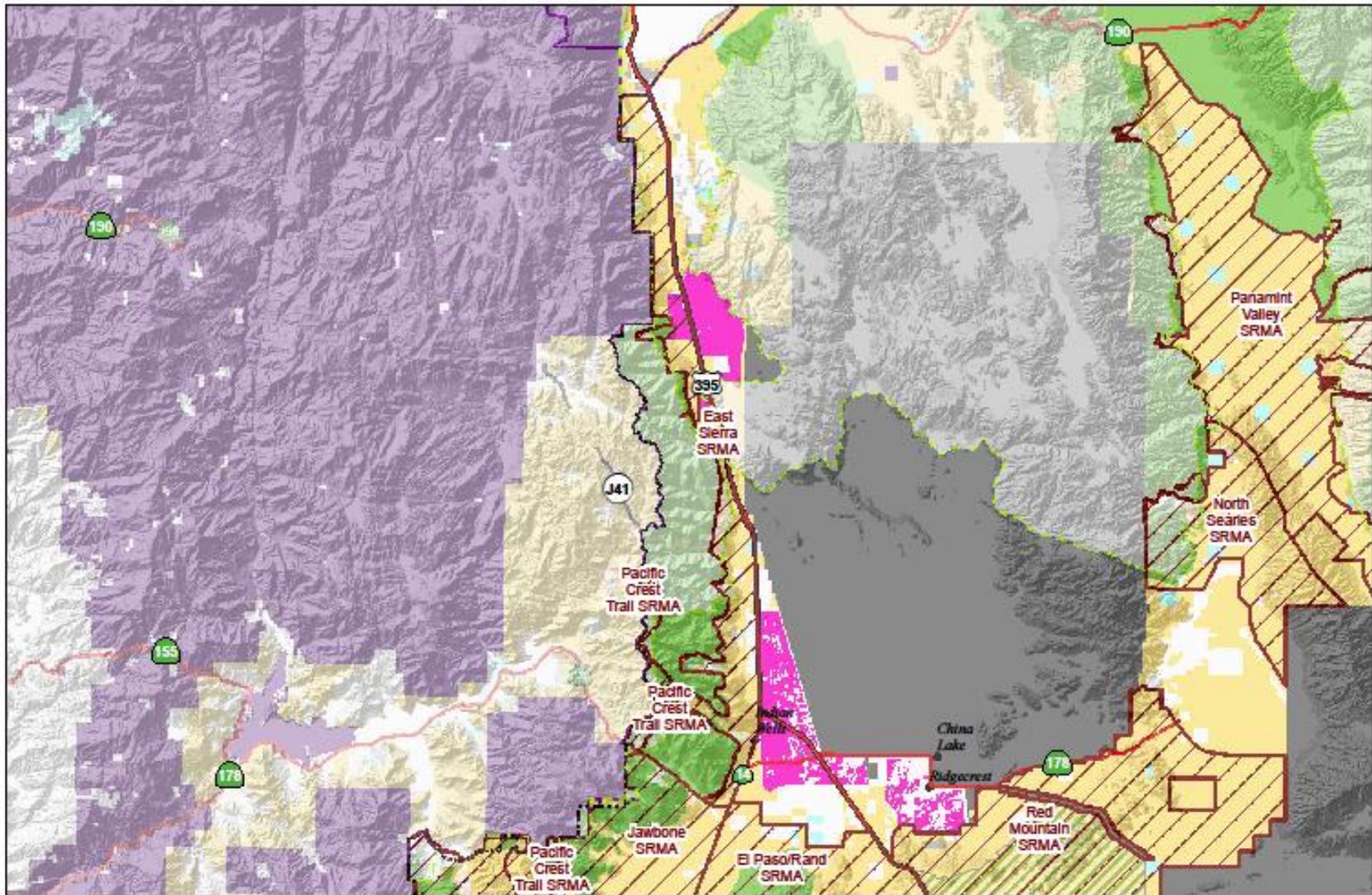
Implementation Decisions:

1. Prohibit target shooting in sensitive areas and in areas where people typically congregate in large numbers to park or camp, i.e., Short and Sand canyons.
2. Increase regular ranger patrols to enforce compliance with fire restrictions, camping limits, and vehicle use on the designated route system.
3. Monitor for OHV incursions and other damages to natural resource.
4. Improve visitor services (maps, brochures, and kiosks), maintain signs, restoration sites, and continue to work with community volunteers to clean-up parking, trail heads, and camping areas on a regular basis.
5. Advance interpretive signing at major access points, routes, and popular destinations.
6. Create transportation travel maps/brochures for distribution and include desert survival for safety element.

Mitigation:

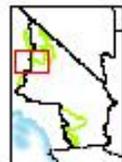
1. Maintain interpretive developments and materials, which enhance recreation opportunities and public enjoyment and to better appreciate the significance of historic sites. Route maintenance if needed of route network and area maintenance should occur including installation of routine signs, markers, culverts, ditches, water bars, barriers, gates, or cattle guards on/or adjacent to roads, routes, and trails.
2. Maintain through traffic motorized route network connectivity with roads and trails leading into and through the Eastern Sierra SRMA.
3. Manage renewable energy development on adjacent and nearby lands to avoid traffic conflicts with visitors & permitted uses.

East Sierra SRMA



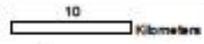
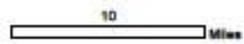
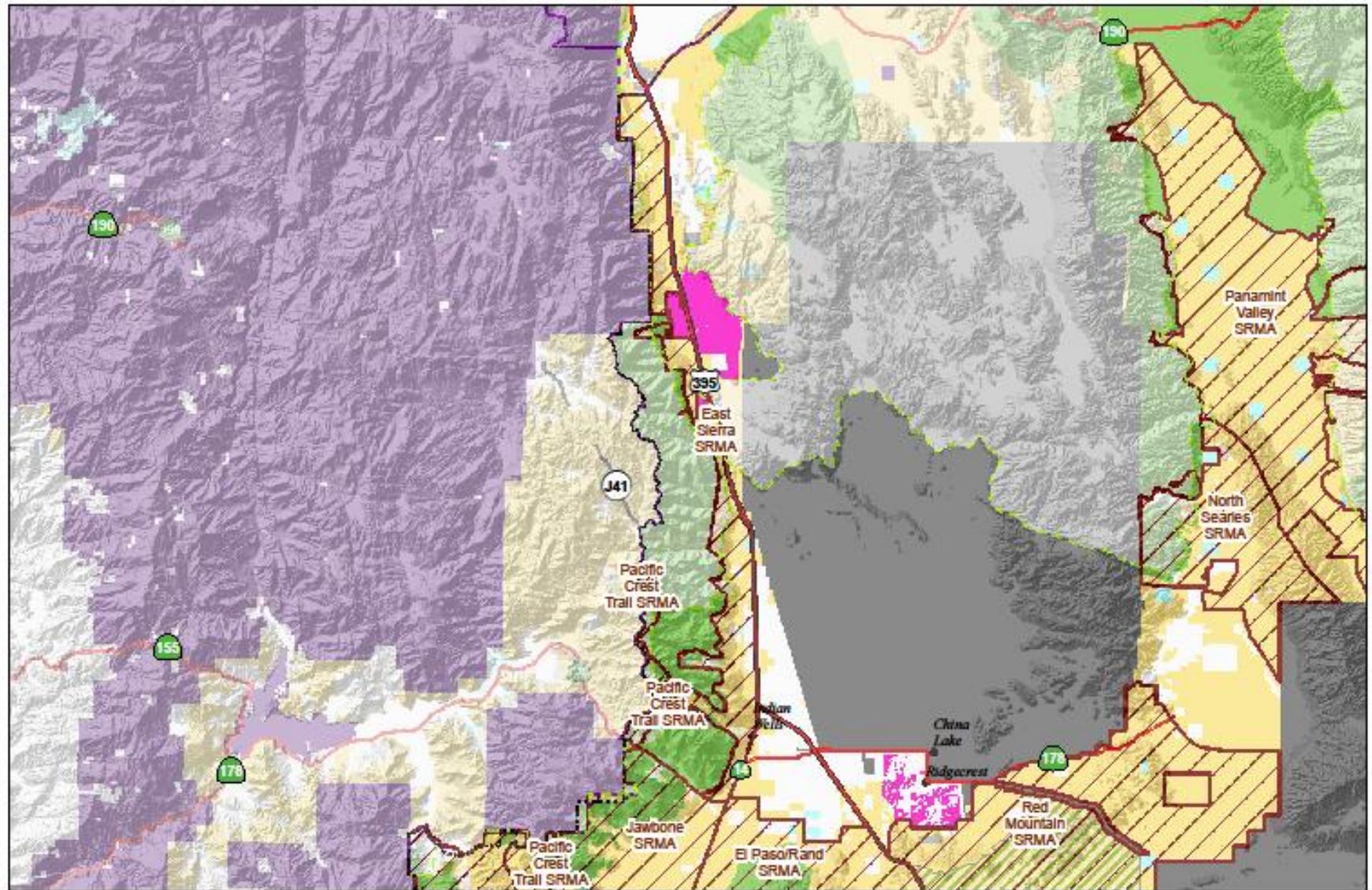
Preferred Alternative SRMAs and ERMAs
 Date Printed: 6/25/2014
 Prepared by BLM California State Office

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|-------------------------------------|------------------|---------------------------|-------------|
| ACEC Layers | ● Cities | Land Status | GTIF |
| Proposed SRMA | CDCA Boundary | Bureau of Land Management | Interstate |
| Design Focus Areas | DRECP Boundary | State | US Hwy |
| OHV Areas | BLM Field Office | Other Federal | CA Hwy |
| Legislatively and Legally Protected | | Military | County Hwy |
| | | Private | |



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East Sierra SRMA



Alternative 1 SRMAs

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ACEC Layers

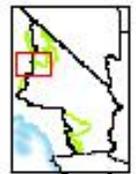
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- Design Focus Areas
- OHV Areas
- Legislatively and Legally Protected
- Cities
- CDCA Boundary
- DRECP Boundary
- BLM Field Office

Land Status

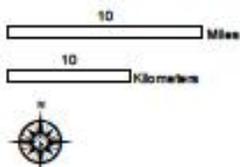
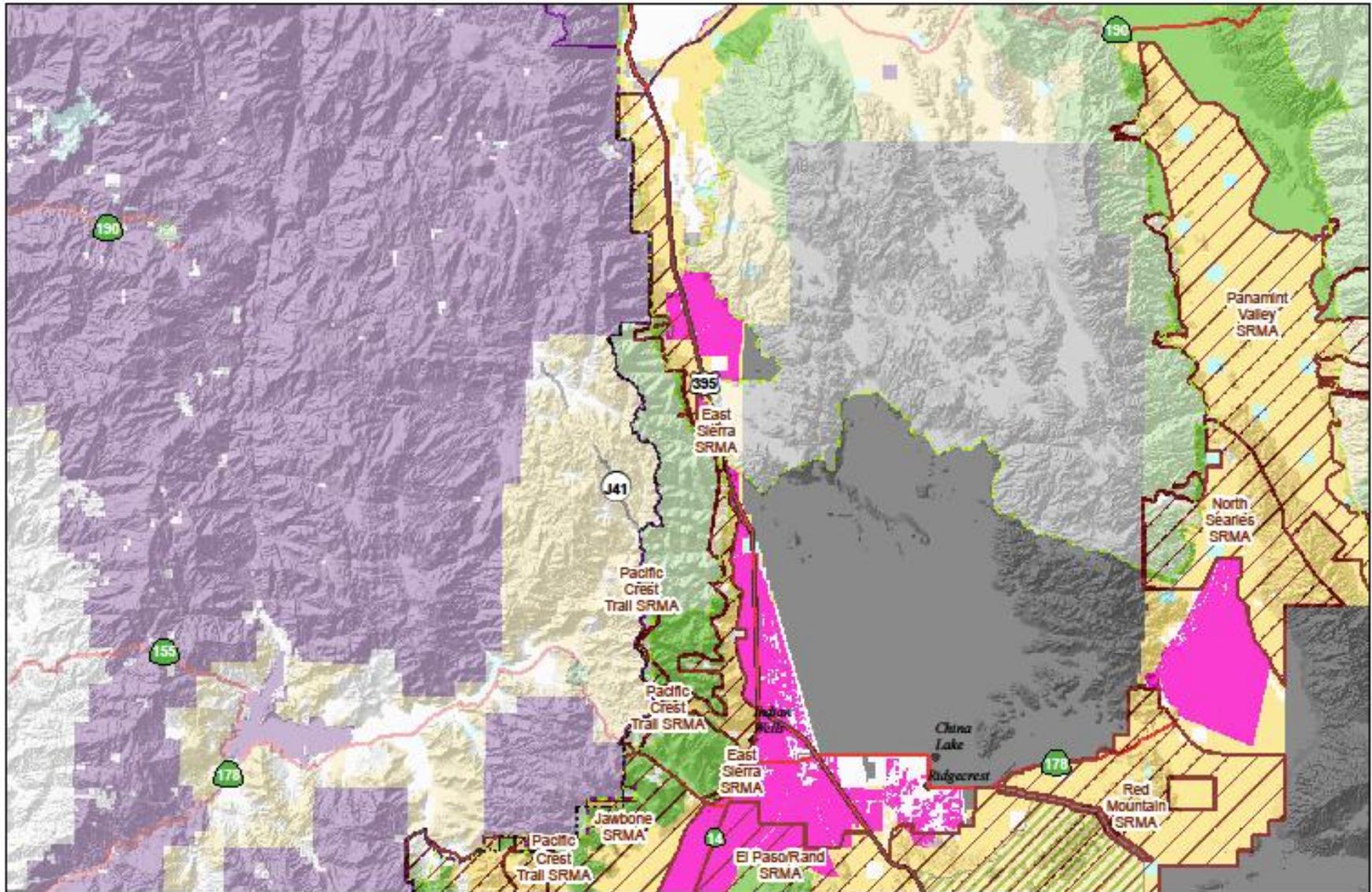
- Bureau of Land Management
- State
- Other Federal
- Military
- Private

GTLP

- Interstate
- US Hwy
- CA Hwy
- County Hwy



East Sierra SRMA



Alternative 2 SRMAs

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ACEC Layers

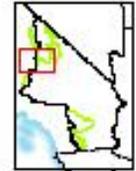
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- Design Focus Areas
- OHV Areas
- Legislatively and Legally Protected
- Cities
- CDCA Boundary
- DRECP Boundary
- BLM Field Office

Land Status

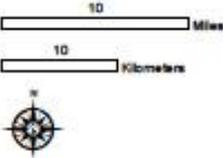
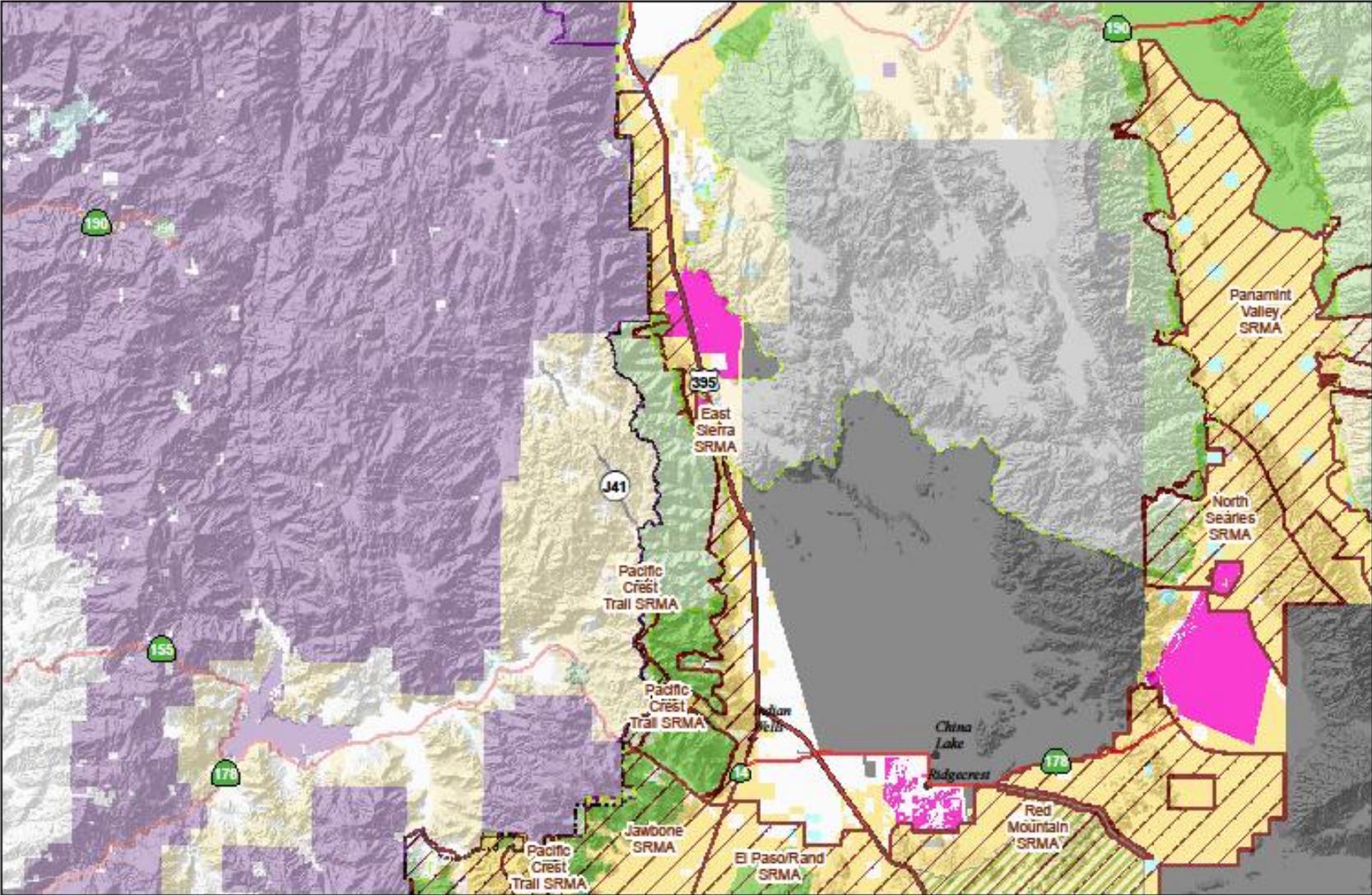
- Bureau of Land Management
- State
- Other Federal
- Military
- Private

GTIF

- Interstate
- US Hwy
- CA Hwy
- County Hwy



East Sierra SRMA



Alternative 3 SRMAs

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ACEC Layers

- Proposed SRMA
- Design Focus Areas
- OHV Areas
- Legislatively and Legally Protected

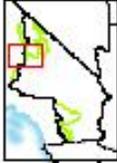
- Cities
- CDCA Boundary
- DRECP Boundary
- BLM Field Office

Land Status

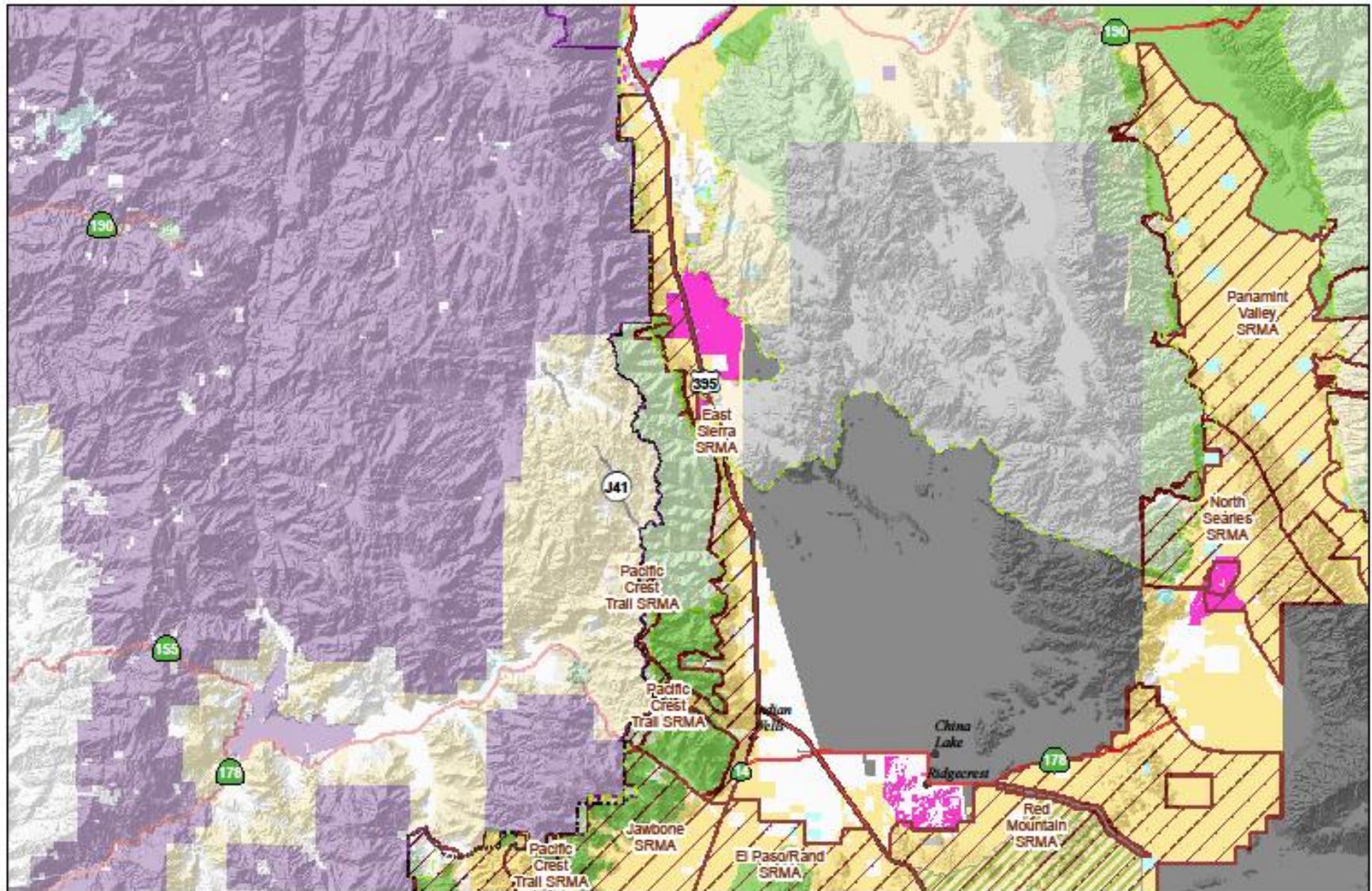
- Bureau of Land Management
- State
- Other Federal
- Military
- Private

OTIF

- Interstate
- US Hwy
- CA Hwy
- County Hwy



East Sierra SRMA



10 Miles

10 Kilometers



Alternative 4 SRMAs

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ACEC Layers

- Proposed SRMA
- 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

GTIP

- Interstate
- US Hwy
- CA Hwy
- County Hwy

