

RECLAMATION

Managing Water in the West

Environmental Assessment

Carrizo Plain National Monument Land Acquisition Project, San Luis Obispo County, California

18-13-MP



**U.S. Bureau of Reclamation
Mid-Pacific Region
Sacramento, California**

February 2018

Mission Statements

The Department of the Interior protects and manages the Nation's natural resources and cultural heritage; provides scientific and other information about those resources; and honors its trust responsibilities or special commitments to American Indians, Alaska Natives, and affiliated island communities.

The mission of the Bureau of Reclamation is to manage, develop, and protect water and related resources in an environmentally and economically sound manner in the interest of the American public.

List of Abbreviations and Acronyms

BLM	Bureau of Land Management
CPNM	Carrizo Plain National Monument
CVP	Central Valley Project
D-1641	State Water Resources Control Board Decision 1641
EA	Environmental Assessment
HRP	Habitat Restoration Program
ITA	Indian Trust Assets
NHPA	National Historic Preservation Act
USFWS	U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service

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Section 1 Introduction

In conformance with the National Environmental Policy Act of 1969, Council on Environmental Quality regulations (40 CFR 1500-1508), and Department of Interior Regulations (43 CFR Part 46), the Bureau of Reclamation (Reclamation) prepared this Environmental Assessment (EA) to evaluate and disclose potential environmental impacts associated with providing funds to the Bureau of Land Management (BLM) for the Carrizo Plain National Monument Land Acquisition Project.

Through an interagency agreement, Reclamation would provide \$732,930 from the Central Valley Project Improvement Act Habitat Restoration Program (HRP) to BLM to conduct land acquisitions to conserve habitats for federally listed San Joaquin Valley upland species. BLM has proposed that \$450,065 of the \$732,930 be used to purchase four private parcels of land inholdings, totaling 290 acres, which are inholdings surrounded by lands within the Carrizo Plain National Monument (CPNM). The parcels are in the Carrizo Plain in southeastern San Luis Obispo County, California (Figure 1). After acquisition of the proposed parcels, BLM would incorporate the parcels into the CPNM, inventory them for their resource and endangered species conservation values, and manage them consistent with the CPNM Resource Management Plan (RMP).

BLM is contacting other landowners, within the geographic area covered by their office, that have properties containing potential habitats for federally listed San Joaquin Valley upland species with the intention of purchasing property using the remaining \$282,865. When a suitable willing seller is identified, BLM will seek approval from Reclamation to use the remaining funds to purchase the property through a modification of the interagency agreement. Potential environmental effects from future land acquisitions will be evaluated in a separate EA, as necessary.

1.1 Previous Environmental Documents

BLM prepared the CPNM Proposed Resource Management Plan and Final Environmental Impact Statement (PRMP/EIS) which describes the management actions and land uses proposed by BLM's Bakersfield Field Office for the CPNM (BLM 2009). The PRMP/EIS was released to the public in September 2009 and a Record of Decision (ROD) was signed April 10, 2010. The 2009 PRMP/EIS evaluated the following environmental issues: biological resources, fire and fuels management, air quality, soils, water resources, wild and scenic rivers, climate, geology and paleontology, cultural resources, visual resources, wilderness study area and other lands with wilderness characteristics, areas of critical environmental concern, livestock grazing, recreation and interpretation, public safety and emergency services, administrative facilities, travel management, minerals, lands and realty, social and economic conditions, solid and hazardous waste. The 2009 PRMP/EIS found effects from the selected plan would result in negligible to moderate impacts to most of the resources evaluated. Implementation of standard operating procedures, stipulations in contracts, and best management practices, would lessen effects. The 2009 PRMP/EIS found there would be beneficial effects to

environmental justice, social and economic conditions, fire and fuel management, cultural resources, and biological resources.

Reclamation performed an independent review of the 2009 PRMP/EIS and the 2010 ROD and found the documents to be sufficient. The environmental analyses and findings are incorporated by reference into this document to the extent practicable. The 2009 PRMP/EIS is a programmatic document which evaluated the effects of implementing a broad list of goals, objectives, and management actions. This EA will provide an additional discussion of potential effects on Indian sacred sites, Indian trust assets, and biological resources specific to the properties being proposed for acquisition.

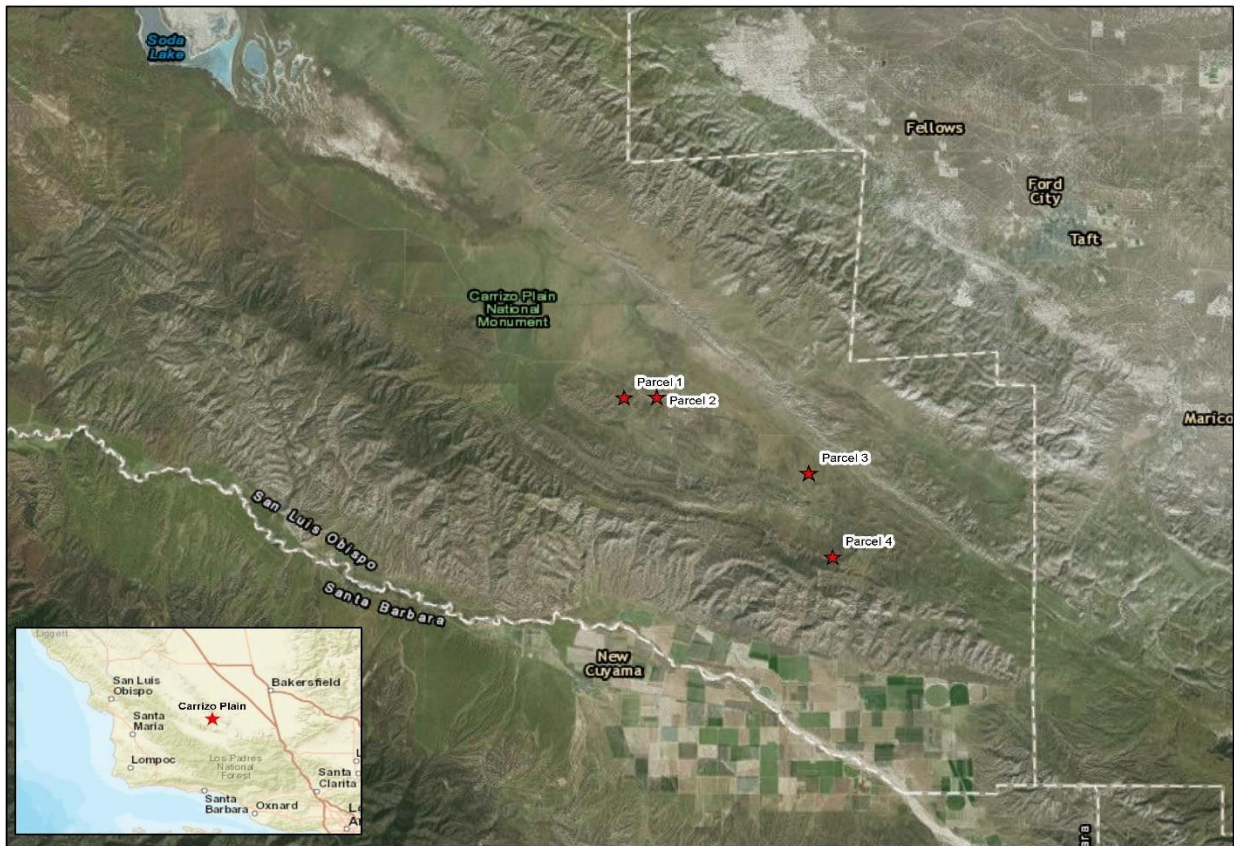


Figure 1. Locations of the Proposed Acquisition Parcels.

1.2 Background and Need for the Proposal

The HRP helps mitigate past impacts of Reclamation’s Central Valley Project (CVP) on threatened and endangered species, and helps minimize future impacts. The program also helps meet mitigation required of Reclamation by the California State Water Resources Control Board Decision 1641 (D-1641). On December 29, 1999, through D-1641 the State Water Resources Control Board concurred with a Reclamation petition to expand its authorized place of use to include certain areas already receiving CVP water. The

Decision states that Reclamation shall provide compensation and habitat values that mitigate for actions associated with the delivery of CVP water to lands previously outside the authorized place of use. The HRP is a program through which Reclamation provides mitigation to meet D-1641 requirements.

The federally-listed as endangered San Joaquin kit fox (*Vulpes macrotis mutica*), giant kangaroo rat (*Dipodomys ingens*), blunt-nosed leopard lizard (*Gambelia sila*), San Joaquin woolly threads (*Lembertia congdonii*), California jewelflower (*Caulanthus californica*), Kern mallow (*Eremalche kernensis*), and the federally-listed as threatened Kern primrose sphinx moth (*Euproserpines euterpe*) would benefit from acquisition and conservation of lands at the CPNM by BLM. The species' populations have declined as a direct result of the conversion of arid grasslands and scrublands to irrigated agriculture, in part due to the availability of CVP water.

The purchase and management of the parcels by BLM would benefit listed species populations by preventing future habitat fragmentation and maintaining habitat connectivity; enhancing species' ability to locate and disperse-to suitable habitats; and facilitating BLM's ability to more effectively manage lands within the CPNM for the benefit of CVP-impacted and other species.

Section 2 Alternatives Including the Proposed Action

2.1 No Action Alternative

Under the no action alternative, Reclamation would not provide funding from the HRP to BLM to purchase lands to conserve habitats for federally listed San Joaquin Valley upland species. To complete the purchase of the parcels, BLM would need to obtain funding from other public or private sources. If funding cannot be secured, BLM would not be able to purchase and preserve the parcels. For the purposes of this EA, the consequence of Reclamation not providing funding for the Proposed Action would be “no acquisition of the parcels” and the current conditions will remain. The owners of the parcels are absentee and are not using the properties.

2.2 Proposed Action Alternative

Under the Proposed Action, Reclamation would provide \$732,930 from the HRP to BLM. Of those funds, \$450,065 would go towards the purchase four parcels of land totaling 290 acres in the Carrizo Plain. After the parcels are acquired, BLM would incorporate them into the CPNM, inventory them for their resource and endangered species conservation values, and manage them to benefit CVP-impacted listed species consistent with the CPNM RMP.

Section 3 Affected Environment and Environmental Consequences

3.1 Resources Not Analyzed in Detail

Department of Interior Regulations, Executive Orders, and Reclamation guidelines require a discussion of Indian sacred sites, and Indian trust assets, (ITA) when preparing environmental documentation. Impacts to these resources were considered and found to be absent, and brief explanations for their elimination from further consideration are provided below.

Indian Sacred Sites

After the acquisition of the parcels and ownership is transferred to BLM, EO 13007 would become effective. BLM would be responsible for working with any tribes to ensure any activities related to the action do not impede use of sacred sites.

Indian Trust Assets

ITA are legal interests in assets that are held in trust by the United States for federally recognized Indian tribes or individuals. There are no Indian reservations, rancherias or allotments in the project area. The closest ITA to the project area is the Santa Ynez about 43 miles to the southwest. The Proposed Action will have no effect on ITA (Appendix A).

3.2 Biological Resources

This section describes the biological resources at the proposed acquisition properties and the potential effects of the alternatives on those resources.

3.2.1 Affected Environment

Vegetation

Parcels 1 and 2 have the same property owner and total 120 acres combined. The vegetation communities on these parcels include Ephedra woodland and California grassland. The woodland is dominated by desert tea (*Ephedra californica*) with an understory of grassland species. Grasslands on the parcels are dominated by red brome (*Bromus madritensis* var. *rubens*) and Arabian grass (*Schismus* spp.), but also include a variety of native wildflower species such as common goldfields (*Lasthenia gracilis*), hillside daisy (*Monolopia lanceolata*), fireweed (*Amsinckia* spp.), yellow pincushion (*Chaenactis glabriscula* var. *glabriscula*), thistle sage (*Salvia carduacea*), and purple owl's clover (*Castilleja exserta* ssp. *exserta*). Populations of the listed Kern mallow and California jewelflower, and well-developed soil crusts typical of arid alkali soils, are also present on the properties.

Parcel 3 is a 10-acre property. The vegetation community on the property is primarily California annual grassland with a limited shrub component. The grassland is a diverse

mix of species including non-native grasses, native wildflowers, and populations of the federally listed San Joaquin woolly threads. Some areas support healthy biological soil crusts. The patchiness of the grassland habitat is a result of modification of the environment by the giant kangaroo rats, including extensive burrowing and vegetation clipping.

Parcel 4 is a 160-acre property. The vegetation community on the property includes a mix of open juniper woodland, mixed shrub scrub, saltbush scrub, and California annual grassland. The dominant species in the woodland is California juniper (*Juniperus californica*). The grasslands are dominated by the non-native grasses but also include a variety of native wildflower species. Also present is the listed Kern Mallow and California jewelflower.

Wildlife

Common wildlife known to occur at the CPNM include California ground squirrel, coyote, tule elk, pronghorn, northern harrier, red-tailed hawk, American kestrel, prairie falcon, burrowing owl, western fence lizard, and western rattlesnake (BLM 2010). Many active giant kangaroo rat burrow systems have been observed by BLM staff on all four parcels. The parcels also contain San Joaquin kit fox foraging habitat due to the open topography and abundant small mammal prey base. Blunt-nosed leopard lizard and Coast horned lizard have been observed on the parcels by BLM.

Special Status Species

A species list was obtained from the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service (USFWS) for the Panorama Hills, Elkhorn Hills, Wells Ranch, Painted Rock, and Caliente Mountain U.S. Geological Survey 7.5 minute quadrangles which in total contain the parcels and adjacent lands. No proposed or designated critical habitat are in the proposed acquisition parcels. The San Joaquin kit fox, giant kangaroo rat, blunt-nosed leopard lizard, San Joaquin woolly threads, California jewelflower, Kern mallow, and the Kern primrose sphinx moth have the potential to occur or have been observed at the properties. Observations are either recorded occurrences in the California Natural Diversity Database, or were seen by BLM, USFWS, and Reclamation employees during site visits to the parcels.

3.2.2 Environmental Consequences

No Action Alternative

Under the no action alternative, Reclamation would not provide \$450,065 from the HRP to BLM to purchase lands and increase their holdings within the CPNM. Without acquiring the lands, BLM's ability to fully conserve and manage federally listed species and other sensitive species at the CPNM could be hindered. BLM's ability to reduce habitat fragmentation, enhance species dispersal to nearby habitats, and improve habitat management for listed species at the CPNM could be delayed.

Proposed Action Alternative

The Proposed Action would provide long-term conservation and management of biological resources through permanent protection of the land and management consistent

with the CPNM RMP. The Proposed Action would also help BLM's recovery efforts to increase listed species populations through habitat conservation and management as called for in the recovery plan for upland species of the San Joaquin Valley (USFWS 1998).

Once the properties are acquired, BLM would manage them consistent with the CPNM RMP to maintain and restore ecologically important plant communities and populations. The CPNM RMP requires actions to be taken to control the spread of nonnative weedy species and other nonnative plants, and to maintain or improve nesting, roosting, and foraging habitat for raptors and ground-nesting birds and migratory birds. In addition, as part of the CPNM, the parcels would be managed in a manner that maintains or increases the population of special status species and their habitats. Management activities would be completed in accordance with the Carrizo Plain Natural Area Biological Opinion (USFWS 1996).

3.3 Cumulative Effects

Per CEQ regulations for implementing the procedural provisions of the National Environmental Policy Act, a cumulative impact is defined as *the impact on the environment which results from the incremental impact of the action when added to other past, present, and reasonably foreseeable future actions regardless of what agency (Federal or non-Federal) or person undertakes such other actions*. Cumulative effects can result from individually minor but collectively significant actions taking place over a period of time.

There are no adverse impacts associated with implementing the Proposed Action, and therefore there are no cumulative effects to consider.

Section 4 Consultation and Coordination

Reclamation consulted with the following agencies regarding the Proposed Action:

- Bureau of Land Management, Bakersfield Field Office
- California Office of Historic Preservation
- U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, Sacramento Fish and Wildlife Office

4.1 HRP and CVPCP Technical Team

The HRP program managers are guided by a Technical Team of biologists and natural resource specialists from Reclamation, USFWS, and the California Department of Fish and Wildlife. During the period of October 20, 2014 through February 18, 2015, members of the Technical Team reviewed and scored proposals submitted to Reclamation for consideration for funding. BLM's proposal for the project titled "The Kern Primrose Sphinx Moth Walker Basin Acquisition Project," which requested funding for the purchase of parcels in the Walker Basin of eastern Kern County to protect habitats for the Kern Primrose Sphinx Moth, ranked in the top tier of proposals and was selected

for funding following evaluation by the Team. During March 2015, Reclamation and USFWS management approved the proposal for funding.

After Reclamation's approval of use of funds for purchase of the parcels, BLM informed Reclamation that after reviewing the protective covenants and restrictions placed on the Walker Basin parcels, requirements were included that would compel BLM to obligate future funds which it cannot do. As a result, BLM notified Reclamation that it could not proceed with the purchase of the parcels. In May 2017, BLM identified four parcels totaling 290 acres without such covenants and restrictions within the CPNM in San Luis Obispo County constituting the Proposed Action which they recommended purchasing in place of the Walker Basin properties. Acquisition of these properties was approved by HRP managers because it would provide greater benefit to threatened and endangered CVP-impacted species.

4.2 Endangered Species Act (16 USC § 1531 et seq.)

Section 7 of the Endangered Species Act (ESA) requires Federal agencies, in consultation with the Secretary of the Interior, to ensure that their actions do not jeopardize the continued existence of endangered or threatened species, or result in the destruction or adverse modification of the critical habitat of these species. Implementation of the Proposed Action would have no short-term effect and would provide long-term benefits to federally listed species (Appendix B).

4.3 National Historic Preservation Act (Title 54 USC § 306108)

A Reclamation Archaeologist has reviewed the project description and has determined that the proposed action does not have the potential to cause effects to historic properties, should such properties be present, pursuant to the National Historic Preservation Act (NHPA) Section 106 regulations codified under 36 CFR § 800.3(a)(1).

The proposed action involves no ground disturbing activity, and constitutes solely the provision for funding from Reclamation to BLM toward acquisition of the land. Once obtained, the BLM would be the land managing agency of record, and thus responsible for any further NHPA Section 106 obligations outside the scope of this undertaking. Reclamation has no further obligations under NHPA Section 106, pursuant to 36 CFR § 800.3(a)(1) (Appendix C).

4.4 Public Review Period

Reclamation intends to provide the public with an opportunity to comment on the draft EA during a 14-day public review period.

Section 5 References

U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service (USFWS). 1996. Carrizo Plain Natural Area Biological Opinion.

U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service (USFWS). 1998. Recovery plan for upland species of the San Joaquin Valley, California, Region 1, Portland, OR. 319 pp.

Bureau of Land Management (BLM) 2009. Carrizo Plain National Monument Proposed Resource Management Plan and Final Environmental Impact Statement for the Bakersfield Field Office.

Bureau of Land Management (BLM) 2010. Carrizo Plain National Monument Approved Resource Management Plan and Record of Decision for the Bakersfield Field Office.

Appendix A

Indian Trust Assets Compliance

Indian Trust Assets Request Form

**Please send your request to: Kevin Clancy, kclancy@usbr.gov

Date:

Requested by	Jamie LeFevre, x 5035
Fund	15XR0680A3
WBS	RX086349991000000
Cost Center	2015200
Region # (if other than MP)	(NA)
Project Name	Carrizo Plain National Monument Land Acquisition Project, San Luis Obispo and Santa Barbara Counties, California
CEC or EA Number	
Project Description	Reclamation would provide \$732,930 from the HRP to Bureau of Land Management (BLM) to help purchase part of 4 parcels of land totaling 290 acres within the Carrizo Plain National Monument. After acquisition of the parcels, BLM would inventory the properties and manage the lands consistent with the Bakersfield Resource Management Plan. BLM's goals and objectives are to manage these lands for the protection of special status species, promote environmental education, and create wildlife-related recreational opportunities.
*Project Location (Township, Range, Section, e.g., T12 R5E S10, or XY cords)	The properties are located in San Luis Obispo and Santa Barbara Counties. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Buttke Property: APN: 096-381-015 is a 160 acre parcel located in Section 32, Township 11 North, Range 25 West, San Bernardino Base and Meridian (SBBM) in San Luis Obispo County. • Gresham Property: Two parcels with APN's: 096-231-003 and 096-231-004 with a total of 120 acres. The parcels are located in Sections 4 and

	<p>5, Township 11 North, Range 26 West, SBBM in San Luis Obispo County.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Laska Property: APN: 096-401-015 is a 10 acre parcel located in Section 18, Township 11 North, Range 25 West, SBBM in San Luis Obispo County.
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*Please include map with request, if available

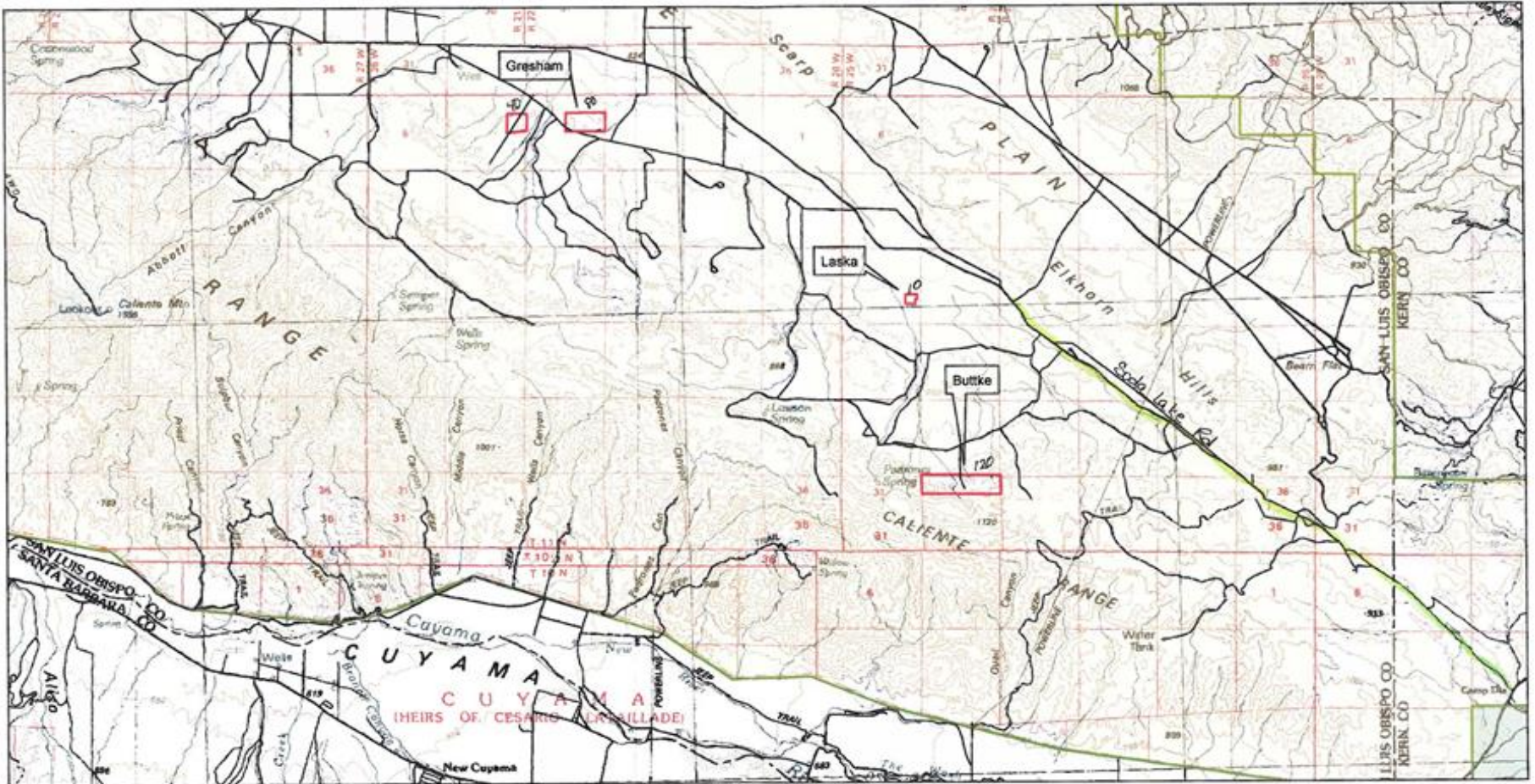
ITA Determination:

The closest ITA to the proposed Carrizo Plain National Monument Land Acquisition Project is the Santa Ynez Band of Chumash Mission Indians which is approximately 43 miles southwest of the project site. (See attached image).

Based on the nature of the planned work it does not appear to be in an area that will impact Indian hunting or fishing resources or water rights nor is the proposed activity on actual Indian lands. It is reasonable to assume that the proposed action will not have any impacts on ITAs.

<p><i>K. Clancy</i></p> <hr/> <p>Signature</p>	<p>Kevin Clancy</p> <hr/> <p>Printed name of approver</p>	<p>08/02/2017</p> <hr/> <p>Date</p>
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BOR Funds Possible Acquisitions



Legend

- Proposed Properties
- Cuyama Boundary

AGENCY

- Bureau of Land Management
- Unclassified

N

14,000 7,000 0 Feet

Laska - 10 Acres
 Sec. 18, T. 11 N., R. 25 W.,
 Butte - 160 Acres
 Sec. 32, T. 11 N., R. 25 W.,
 Gresham - 120 Acres
 Sec. 4 & 5, T. 11 N., R. 26 W.,
 San Luis Obispo County

Figure 1. Location of the proposed acquisition parcels.

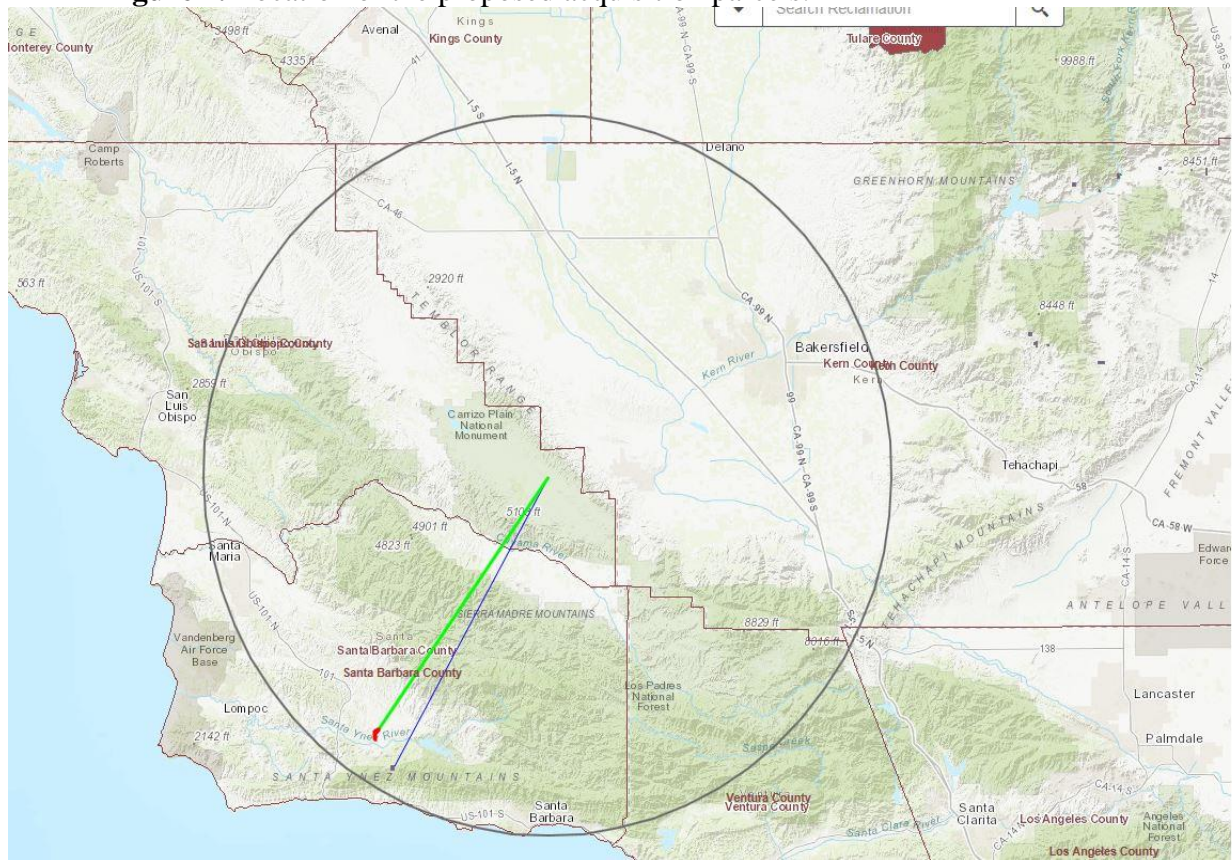


Figure 2. Location of the closest Native America Lands.

Native American Lands

Close App

This application locates Native American Lands trust assets within the selected search radius and lists the results with distances.

Step 1. Select a search radius (miles)

50

Step 2. Longitude and Latitude

If you CLICK on the map, the coordinates for the location will be inserted below. Or, you can type them manually.

Longitude: -119.64774

Latitude: 35.12047

Step 3. Find closest Native American Lands

Search

Distance to closest native american land: 43.06 miles
 Name: Santa Ynez
 Tribe: Santa Ynez Band of Chumash Mission Indians

[Help](#)

Appendix B

Endangered Species Act Compliance

MP-152
ENV 7.00

MEMORANDUM

To: Dan Strait, CVPIA Habitat Restoration Program Manager
MP-152

From: Jamie LeFevre
Natural Resources Specialist

Subject: No-Effect Determination for the Carrizo Plain National Monument Land Acquisition Project, San Luis Obispo County, California

The Bureau of Reclamation (Reclamation) proposes to provide \$732,930 to the Bureau of Land Management (BLM) for land acquisition through the Central Valley Project Improvement Act Habitat Restoration Program. BLM would purchase four private parcels of land, totaling 290 acres, which are inholdings surrounded by lands within the Carrizo Plain National Monument (CPNM), to protect and conserve habitats for federally listed San Joaquin Valley upland species. The parcels proposed to be acquired are located in the Carrizo Plain in southeastern San Luis Obispo County, California.

Purchase of the parcels would directly benefit the long-term conservation and management of the federally endangered San Joaquin kit fox (*Vulpes macrotis mutica*), giant kangaroo rat (*Dipodomys ingens*), blunt-nosed leopard lizard (*Gambelia sila*), Kern mallow (*Eremalche kernensis*), and California jewelflower (*Caulanthus californicus*) and federally threatened Kern primrose sphinx moth (*Euproserpines Euterpe*) which are assumed to be present. Kern primrose sphinx moth and giant kangaroo rat are reported by BLM to be present at CPNM, whereas the San Joaquin Kit fox, blunt-nosed leopard lizard, Kern mallow, and California jewelflower have been observed by BLM and Reclamation staff on the parcels. BLM manages the CPNM for the protection of special status species, to promote environmental education, and to create wildlife-related recreational opportunities. After acquisition of the parcels, BLM would inventory the properties and manage the lands consistent with the CPNM management plan.

Purchase of the parcels is an administrative action only and would not facilitate any change in land use or new activity that would result in modification or destruction of listed species' habitat. Once purchased, future costs and responsibilities related to the use and management of the parcels would be borne by the BLM, including those associated with inventorying and managing the natural resources on Federal lands. Any subsequent change in management by BLM would require consideration of any effects to listed species.

Based on the above analysis, Reclamation has determined the proposed action would not affect any proposed or listed species or critical habitat under the Endangered Species Act of 1973, as amended (16 U.S.C. §1531 et seq.).

Appendix C

Cultural Resources Compliance

CULTURAL RESOURCES COMPLIANCE
Division of Environmental Affairs
Cultural Resources Branch (MP-153)

MP-153 Tracking Number: 17-MPRO-239

Project Name: Carrizo Plain National Monument Land Acquisition Project

NEPA Document: EA

NEPA Contact:, Jamie Lefevre Natural Resource Specialist

MP 153 Cultural Resources Reviewer: Scott Williams, Archaeologist 

Date: August 14, 2017

Through interagency agreement (IA), Reclamation would provide funding from the Central Valley Project Improvement Act Habitat Restoration Program (HRP) to BLM to conduct land acquisitions. This is the type of undertaking that does not have the potential to cause effects to historic properties, should such properties be present, pursuant to the NHPA Section 106 regulations codified at 36 CFR § 800.3(a)(1). Reclamation has no further obligations under NHPA Section 106, pursuant to 36 CFR § 800.3(a)(1).

The HRP helps mitigate past impacts of Reclamation's Central Valley Project (CVP) on threatened and endangered species, and helps minimize future impacts. The program also helps meet mitigation required of Reclamation by the California State Water Resources Control Board (SWRCB) Decision 1641 (D-1641). The Bakersfield Office of the Bureau of Land Management will purchase the land parcels and manage them according to the Carrizo Plain National Monument Resource Management Plan. This is a title change action only. No on-the-ground activities will occur. BLM will be responsible for fulfilling NHPA and any other cultural resource compliance requirements for future land use activities.

This document is intended to convey the completion of the NHPA Section 106 process for this undertaking. This action would not have significant impacts on properties listed, or eligible for listing, on the National Register of Historic Places as determined by Reclamation (LND 02-01) (43 CFR 46.215 (g)). Please retain a copy in the administrative record for this action. Should changes be made to this project, additional NHPA Section 106 review, possibly including consultation with the State Historic Preservation Officer, may be necessary. Thank you for providing the opportunity to comment.