

## SECTION 5

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### 5.17 WILDERNESS/RECREATION

#### 5.17.1 AFFECTED ENVIRONMENT

There are several federal wilderness areas managed by the BLM in the vicinity of the Cadiz Project area. As defined in the Wilderness Act of 1964, (16 U.S.C. 1131-1136) wilderness is "...an area where the earth and its community of life are untrammelled by man, where man himself is a visitor and does not remain."

The Act further defines wilderness as "...an area of undeveloped Federal land retaining its primeval character, without permanent improvements or human habitation, which is protected and managed so as to preserve its natural conditions and which (1) generally appears to have been affected primarily by the forces of nature, with the imprint of man's work substantially unnoticeable, (2) has outstanding opportunities for solitude or a primitive and unconfined type of recreation, (3) has at least 5,000 acres of land or is of sufficient size as to make practicable its preservation and use in an unimpaired condition, and (4) may also contain ecological, geological or other features of scientific, educational, scenic, or historical value, (16 U.S.C. 1131)."

The areas designated as wilderness under the Act are to be administered "...for the use and enjoyment of the American people in such a manner as will leave them unimpaired for future use and enjoyment as wilderness." (16 U.S.C. Section 113[a] *et seq*; 78 stat. 891[a]).

Public Law 103-433, 108 stat. 4471, contains regulations regarding the administration of wilderness areas. Section 103(d) states, "The Congress does not intend for the designation of wilderness area in Section 102 of this title to lead to the creation of protective perimeters or buffer zones around any such wilderness area. The fact that nonwilderness activities or uses can be seen or heard from areas within a wilderness area shall not, of itself, preclude such activities or uses up to the boundary of the wilderness area."

Figure 5.17-1 shows the locations of the wilderness areas in the vicinity of the Cadiz Project area. Trilobite Wilderness Area is north of the Cadiz Project area, with the closest boundary approximately three and one-half miles from the Cadiz Project area. This Wilderness Area, which covers 31,160 acres including a large portion of the Marble Mountains as well as long alluvial fans on both sides of the range, is named for the fossils found in the region. Much of this Wilderness Area is shielded from the Cadiz Project area by the south part of the Marble Mountains that lie outside the boundary of this Wilderness Area.

The 146,020-acre Old Woman Mountains Wilderness Area is east of the Cadiz Project area. Topography ranges from 800 feet to more than 5,300 feet at the summit of Old Woman Peak. The west boundary of this Wilderness Area is more than six miles from the project wellfield and project spreading basins on the northern part of the Cadiz Project area. However, approximately 1.25 miles of the west-central boundary of the Old Woman Mountains Wilderness Area is within several hundred feet of a portion of the Combination, the Eastern and Eastern/Canal alternatives.

Cadiz Dunes Wilderness Area, west of the Cadiz Project area, covers 39,740 acres and its focal point is the Cadiz Sand Dunes. These low dunes were formed from winds pushing sand from the area of Cadiz Dry Lake, located outside and west of this Wilderness Area. Cadiz Dunes Wilderness Area is directly adjacent to the water conveyance and power distribution facilities common to all the project alternatives. The northeast boundary of this Wilderness Area is within several hundred feet of the water conveyance and power distribution facilities for a distance of approximately five miles.

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The southeast boundary of Cadiz Dunes Wilderness Area is within several hundred feet of the Western Alternative for approximately 1.25 miles.

The Sheephole Valley Wilderness Area, comprising some 174,800 acres, is west of the Cadiz Project area. The Calumet Mountains, the Sheephole Range and the Sheephole Valley that separates them are within this Wilderness Area. At the closest point, the east boundary of this Wilderness Area is approximately five miles from the Western Alternative and seven miles from the project spreading basins.

Only non-mechanical types of recreation are allowed in wilderness areas. Recreational opportunities include but are not limited to backpacking; primitive, unimproved site camping; hiking; horseback riding; nature study and observation; photography and painting; rock climbing; spelunking; hunting and rock hounding. Motorized vehicles and bicycles are not permitted in wilderness areas.

The BLM does not have a record of the number of people that use the wilderness areas or any data on the times and locations of use of the various wilderness areas.

In addition to the wilderness areas, the BLM manages much of the land in the vicinity of the Cadiz Project area. These lands are managed for multiple uses as described in the California Desert Conservation Act 1980 Plan, as amended. All the types of recreation activity permitted in wilderness areas are also allowable in other BLM managed areas. In addition, bicycles and various motorized vehicle uses are permitted on BLM land outside wilderness areas. Motorized vehicle use is only allowed on existing routes of travel and prohibited where a route is posted. Stopping, parking and vehicular camping along existing routes of travel are allowed within 300 feet of the route. There are no developed camping areas in the vicinity of the Cadiz Project area. In some locations, specific parking or stopping areas may be signed "open" or "closed" to protect fragile or sensitive resources or to provide a safe place to stop. Off road vehicle play is allowed in approved open areas. However, there are no open areas for off-road vehicles in the vicinity of the Cadiz Project area.

The Johnson Valley to Parker Corridor, shown on Figure 5.17-2, is a competitive, off-road motorcycle race route which crosses the water conveyance and power distribution facilities alignments. This American Motorcyclist Association sanctioned race was last held in 1983 and a new BLM permit must be obtained prior to each race. The BLM makes the final determination on the race schedule, speed restrictions, maximum number of participants and the exact alignment and course width, taking into consideration environmental factors and protection of special interest species. The sponsoring association may vary with each race.

There are no existing or planned county or local recreation facilities or parks in the vicinity of the Cadiz Project area.

### 5.17.2 CEQA THRESHOLDS OF SIGNIFICANCE

For purposes of CEQA, a project would have a significant adverse impact related to recreation if it would conflict with established recreational, educational, religious or scientific uses of an area.

For a further discussion of CEQA thresholds of significance, see Section 5.20.

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### 5.17.3 METHODOLOGY

To assess the potential impacts of the Cadiz Project related to wilderness and recreation, existing recreation facilities and allowed recreation uses in the vicinity of the Cadiz Project area were identified. Cadiz Project compatibility or conflict with these facilities and uses was then assessed.

### 5.17.4 IMPACTS

#### **Eastern Alternative**

##### Wilderness Areas

The Eastern Alternative conveyance facilities and power distribution facilities are within several hundred feet of the west boundary of the Old Woman Mountains Wilderness Area for approximately 1.25 miles. The alignment is also within 100 feet of the eastern boundary of the Cadiz Dunes Wilderness Area for approximately five miles. Within the project area there is a single-wire, wood pole supported electric line along a segment of the ARZC track. This electric line ends approximately three miles north of the Cadiz Dunes Wilderness Area. There are electric lines supported by wood poles along the BNSF rail line that cross the Cadiz project area along the north side of the spreading basins. There are overhead electric lines providing service to the El Paso Natural Gas Company facility and to facilities located at Cadiz.

Following implementation of the Cadiz Project, the utility poles and lines associated with the power distribution facility for the Cadiz Project will also be visible from the adjacent parts of these Wilderness Areas.

As a viewer would move farther away from the utility lines, these lines would be less and less distinct in the view, especially as they are seen against the backdrop of distant mountain ranges. Ground surface disturbance from installation of the conveyance facilities would also be visible from adjacent Wilderness Areas. A maximum 200 foot-wide water conveyance facilities construction area would be altered by removal of vegetation and topsoil causing a visible mark on the landscape. Surface soils would be respread over 180 feet of the construction zone, ensuring that drainage depressions are accommodated. A 20-foot wide dirt maintenance road would remain within the 80-foot wide permanent easement along with power distribution system, power poles and low markers to show the location of the underground pipeline. The construction zone, with the exception of the dirt road and power pole locations, would be revegetated. Due to the arid conditions in the Cadiz Project area, it is expected that many years would be required before the vegetation is mature enough to be indistinguishable from the surrounding landscape.

As discussed in Section 5.14 (Aesthetics), users of the Cadiz Dunes and Old Woman Mountains wilderness areas experience views of vast expanses of open desert land interspersed by linear features including existing utility poles and lines along the ARZC and BNSF rail lines, unpaved roads and railroad tracks. Abandoned buildings and military camps and salt mine operations are the other limited man-made intrusions in this vast viewshed. These generally unobstructed desert views increase the feeling of being in a wilderness and away from civilization. With implementation of the Cadiz Project, scarring from the construction zone would introduce additional man-made objects in an area where man's intrusion is generally not noticeable. The closer these Cadiz Project features would be to a viewer, the greater the intrusion would be on the sense of wilderness.

Both the Cadiz Dunes and Old Woman Mountains wilderness areas extend a considerable distance away from the Eastern Alternative. Cadiz Dunes extends an additional 4.5 to six miles from the alignment and the Old Woman Mountains Wilderness Area extends more than 17 miles away. Intervening topography blocks views of the Eastern Alternative from some parts of these wilderness areas. As a result, the Cadiz Project power distribution facility and surface disturbance would not be noticeable from major portions of these wilderness areas. There would also be no operational noise associated with the Cadiz Project discernible from these wilderness areas. The extraction operations associated with the project wellfield will generate only low levels of noise. The closest well to a wilderness area is 4.5 miles away. Well- and pump-associated noise will not be detected at this distance.

#### Johnson Valley to Parker Race Corridor

The Johnson Valley to Parker Race Corridor crosses the Cadiz Project conveyance facilities and power distribution facilities alignment in the vicinity of the Iron Mountains. The last race took place in 1983. However, a potential conflict would occur if pipeline construction were to take place along the race corridor at the time of a future race. Mitigation measure REC-1 prohibits construction within 500 feet of the race route for ten days prior to, during and ten days following the race. This would eliminate any future potential Cadiz Project conflicts with the Johnson Valley to Parker Race.

#### Construction Related Impacts

During installation of the water conveyance and power distribution facilities, construction activities would be visible and construction noise would be evident from adjacent wilderness areas. The construction activities would include topsoil removal and stockpiling, trench excavation, utility preservation/relocation, pipe placement, backfill, appurtenant construction, topsoil replacement and revegetation. It would be anticipated that pipeline construction may last up to three months along the adjacent boundary with Cadiz Dunes Wilderness and a much shorter period along the boundary with the Old Woman Mountains Wilderness.

### **Western Alternative**

#### Wilderness Areas

The Western Alternative is within several hundred feet of the southeast boundary of the Cadiz Dunes Wilderness Area for approximately 1.25 miles and within 100 feet of the east boundary of the Cadiz Dunes Wilderness for approximately five miles. The effects along these parts of the Western Alternative would be the same as described previously for the Eastern Alternative.

#### Johnson Valley to Parker Race Corridor

Cadiz Project impacts related to the Johnson Valley to Parker Race Corridor would be the same for the Western Alternative as described earlier for Eastern Alternative.

#### Construction Related Impacts

Project construction impacts related to wilderness and recreation are the same for the Western Alternative as those described earlier for the Eastern Alternative. It is anticipated that construction of the water conveyance facility may last up to three months along the adjacent southeast boundary and up to three months along the northeast boundary of Cadiz Dunes Wilderness Area.

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### **Combination Alternative**

#### Wilderness Areas

Cadiz Project impacts related to wilderness areas are the same for the Combination Alternative as those described earlier for the Eastern Alternative.

#### Johnson Valley to Parker Race Corridor

Cadiz Project impacts related to the Johnson Valley to Parker Race Corridor for the Combination Alternative would be the same as described earlier for the Eastern Alternative.

#### Construction Related Impacts

Cadiz Project construction impacts related to wilderness and recreation for the Combination Alternative would be the same as those described earlier for the Eastern Alternative.

### **Eastern/Canal Alternative**

#### Wilderness Areas

Cadiz Project impacts related to wilderness areas would be the same for the Eastern/Canal Alternative as those described earlier for the Eastern Alternative. The canal section of the Eastern/Canal Alternative would be approximately three miles from the Old Woman Mountains Wilderness Area and would be visible from higher elevations.

#### Johnson Valley to Parker Race Corridor

Cadiz Project impacts related to the Johnson Valley to Parker Race Corridor for the Eastern/Canal Alternative would be the same as those described earlier for the Eastern Alternative.

#### Construction Related Impacts

Cadiz Project construction impacts related to wilderness and recreation for the Eastern/Canal Alternative would be the same as those described earlier for the Eastern Alternative.

### **No Project**

Under the No Project Alternative, the Cadiz Project would not be constructed. Therefore, recreation and wilderness uses in the area would be expected to remain as they currently exist and there would be no Cadiz Project related impacts to recreation and wilderness.

#### 5.17.5 MITIGATION MEASURES

REC-1 Pipeline construction scheduling in the vicinity of the Johnson Valley to Parker Race corridor shall be coordinated with the BLM. Pipeline construction shall be prohibited within 500 feet of the Johnson Valley to Parker Race route for 10 days prior to, during and for 10 days following a scheduled and permitted race date. Any construction that takes place within the race route must be completed at least 10 days prior to the race. This includes excavation, laying of pipe, backfilling and topsoil replacement.

Mitigation measure AS-1 provided earlier in Section 5.14 (Aesthetics) will protect views from BLM lands used for recreation by requiring that the project pumping plants be earth toned to blend in with the surrounding environment.

Mitigation measure AS-2 provided earlier in Section 5.14 (Aesthetics) will protect BLM lands used for recreation from spillover light.

Mitigation measures N-1 and N-2 provided earlier in Section 5.11 (Noise) will reduce noise during construction. However, construction noise will still be perceptible in the nearby areas of the Cadiz Dunes and Old Woman Mountains Wilderness Areas.

#### 5.17.6 LEVEL OF SIGNIFICANCE AFTER MITIGATION

The Eastern, Eastern/Canal, Western and Combination alternatives would not conflict with any established wilderness and recreational uses in the vicinity of the Cadiz Project area including: backpacking; primitive, unimproved site camping; vehicular camping; hiking; horseback riding; nature study and observation; photography and painting; rockclimbing; spelunking; hunting and rockhounding; or motorized vehicle and bicycle use on existing routes of travel. All these recreational uses can take place on BLM lands following Cadiz Project construction under these alternatives. Therefore, the potential impacts of the Cadiz Project under these alternatives related to these recreation uses will be below a level of significance.

During water conveyance and power distribution facilities construction, potential impacts to the Johnson Valley to Parker Race corridor will be reduced to below a level of significance with implementation of mitigation measure REC-1.

The views from certain points within adjacent wilderness areas will change because Cadiz Project power distribution facilities utility poles and lines and maintenance roads will be visible from some of these areas. The surface disturbance from the conveyance facilities construction will be visible for several years until vegetation matures enough to blend in with the adjacent landscape. These changes in views will be less distinct the farther the viewer is from the Cadiz Project area. These Cadiz Project features will not be noticeable from major portions of the wilderness areas. The changes in views from the wilderness areas will not interfere with wilderness uses of the areas. Therefore, the potential adverse impacts of the Cadiz Project related to wilderness will be below a level of significance.

Noise impacts associated with conveyance facility construction may detract from the wilderness experience in nearby portions of the Cadiz Dunes and Old Woman Mountains Wilderness Areas. This noise impact will be temporary only and will be mitigated by measures N-1 and N-2. Remaining impacts will be below a level of significance. There will be no Cadiz Project operations noise audible from within wilderness areas.