Joshua Tree National Park
Eagle Mountain Boundary Study

National Park Service
U.S. Department of the Interior

Public Review - Environmental Assessment

Newsletter 2, Spring 2016

Dear Friends:

We are pleased to announce the availability of the *Eagle Mountain Boundary Study Including Possible Withdrawal Environmental Assessment* for public review. The National Park Service has completed this document in cooperation with the Bureau of Land Management. The document reflects the comments and concerns shared with the study team during public scoping in Summer 2015. The NPS received over 11,000 comments during the scoping period.

This newsletter provides an overview of the boundary study findings and a summary of the environmental assessment. Once again I invite you to share your ideas and comments. The full document is now available for review on the project website: http://parkplanning.nps.gov/eaglemountain and a limited amount of printed copies are available upon request.

Please join us for one of four public meetings to be held in April and May. At these meetings, the NPS study team will explain the study findings, answer your questions, and gather your comments about the alternatives evaluated in the environmental assessment, including the NPS preferred alternative. A separate public meeting will be scheduled in the future to specifically discuss the possible withdrawal and potential transfer of administrative jurisdiction of federal lands within the area from the Bureau of Land Management to the National Park Service. This meeting will be announced through a Federal Register notice and through notice to those on the mailing list for this study.

Thank you for taking the time to learn about and comment on this study. You may share your thoughts by mail, e-mail, online at: http://parkplanning.nps.gov/eaglemountain, or at one of the upcoming public meetings.

We look forward to hearing from you! Your participation is a key component of this process.

Sincerely,

David Smith
Superintendent
Joshua Tree National Park

Join Us for Upcoming Public Meetings!

Online Meeting
April 29, 2015 • 1:00 -2:30 pm Pacific Time

Desert Center, CA
May 3, 2016 • 1-3 pm

Palm Desert, CA
May 3, 2016 • 6-8 pm

Joshua Tree, CA
May 4, 2016 • 6-8 pm

Newsletter Contents

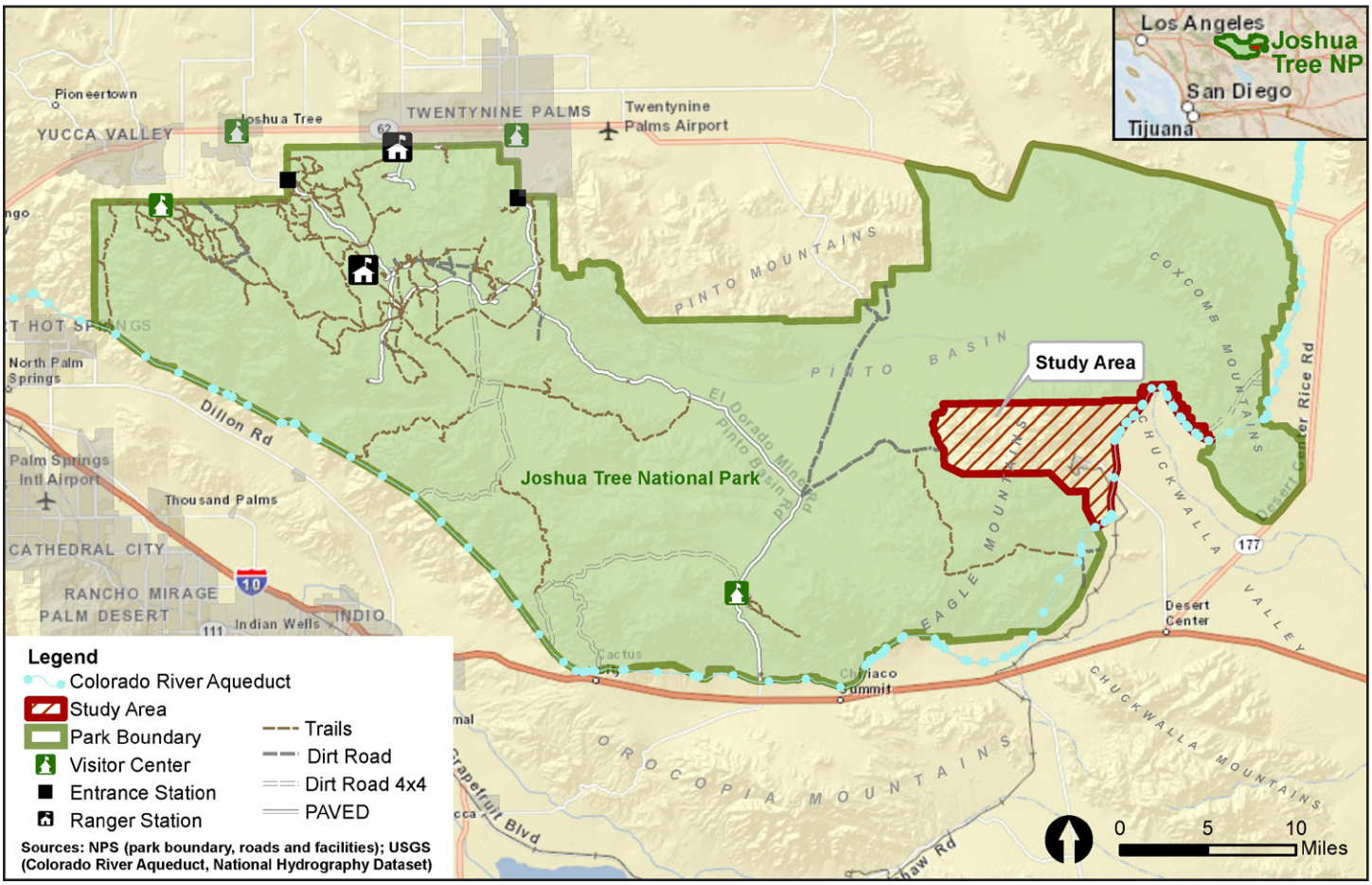
Purpose and Need

The purpose of the *Eagle Mountain Boundary Study Including Possible Withdrawal Environmental Assessment* (boundary study/EA) is to consider whether to expand Joshua Tree National Park to include additional lands in the Eagle Mountain area.

The boundary study/EA also evaluates the potential effects of a withdrawal and transfer of jurisdiction of federal lands in the area from the BLM to the NPS to protect resources related to the purpose of Joshua Tree National Park. The NPS has requested the withdrawal of public lands within the study area (approximately 22,515 acres managed by the BLM) for 20 years from settlement, sale, location, and entry under the public land laws, including the United States mining laws, and leasing or other disposition under mineral or geothermal leasing laws. The purpose of the withdrawal is to complete an administrative transfer of the identified public lands from the BLM to the NPS in accordance with 54 U.S.C. 100506(c)(1)(B) for administration as part of Joshua Tree National Park.

The boundary study is needed for the following reasons:

- Formerly included within the boundary of Joshua Tree National Monument when established in 1936, the area of study is bounded on three sides by national park lands, including the most pristine wilderness areas of the park. Values include dark night skies, high air quality, and natural quiet, all of which could be affected by proposed future uses of the area.
- Regional development projects, urbanization, and the effects of climate change will pose additional challenges to maintaining park biodiversity. Although some portions of the study area have been developed and altered to support the area's former mining operations, the majority of the study area lands (roughly 80%) are primarily undeveloped, containing regionally important habitat and migration corridors for rare and threatened wildlife that inhabit Joshua Tree National Park. Landscape-scale conservation approaches that include opportunities to protect regional wildlife corridors will be an important component in addressing threats to park biodiversity. Future use and development of study area and surrounding lands could also affect important water resources within the park. Joshua Tree National Park's aquifers and springs are connected underground to aquifers in the Eagle Mountain area.
- The study area contains historic resources such as the Eagle Mountain Mine and Townsite which may provide opportunities to expand the mining history currently interpreted in Joshua Tree National Park. There is also high potential for discovery of archeological resources related to the area's long history of human use.
- The study area provides opportunities to expand public enjoyment at Joshua Tree National Park. In addition to the area's interpretive value, visitor opportunities include improved access to some of the most remote areas of the park, and the potential for introducing new recreational opportunities.
- Administratively, the site's proximity to Interstate 10 could improve NPS access to the southeastern end of the park.



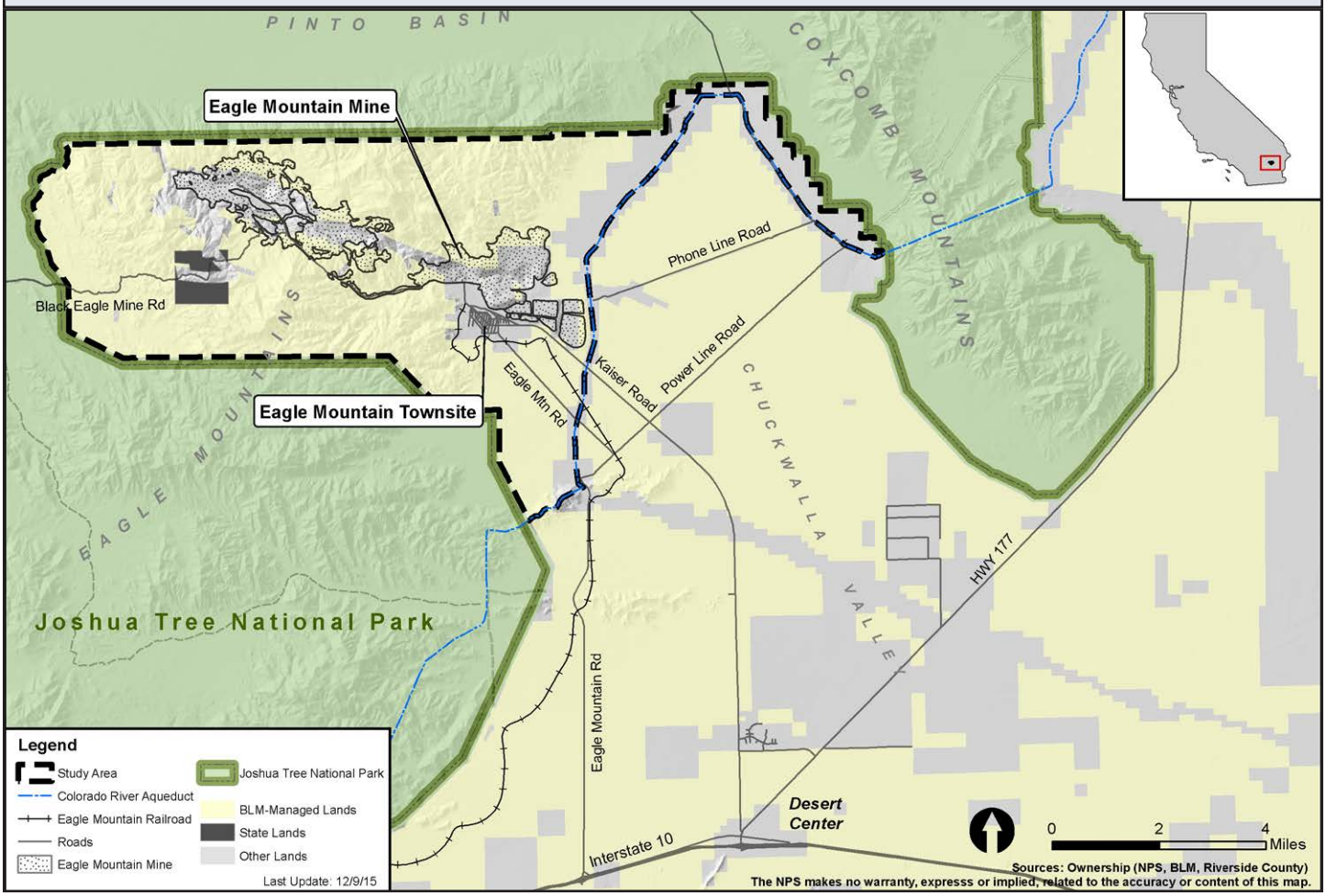
About the Study Area

The study area includes approximately 31,500 acres of land in the Eagle Mountains and Chuckwalla Valley. Located in Riverside County, California, the study area is bounded to the south, west, and north by Joshua Tree National Park. The eastern border of the study area is defined by the Colorado River Aqueduct, which roughly formed the original park boundary established in 1936. The area was removed from the park in the 1950s. At the time Henry J. Kaiser was operating a large iron ore mine, primarily on private patented lands. In 1952, Congress granted Kaiser 460 acres of federal lands for use of the mine in 1952 (Townsite and Millsite) subject to a reversionary interest. Primary access is through the town of Desert Center via Kaiser Road or through the park via Black Eagle Mine Road.

Much of the study area (over 23,000 acres) is federally owned land managed by the Bureau of Land Management (BLM). These lands are largely undisturbed and are adjacent to national park lands. Approximately 5,000 acres of land in the study area is in private ownership, most of which is comprised of the Eagle Mountain Townsite and other features associated with the Eagle Mountain Mine. The Townsite was a community created for mine workers and their families. When the mine ceased full-scale operations in 1983, residents moved elsewhere leaving most structures vacant.

Almost all of the private land is owned by Kaiser Eagle Mountain, LLC (KEM) a subsidiary of the Eagle Crest Energy Company (Eagle Crest) which purchased KEM and its assets from CIL&D, LLC (formerly known as Kaiser Ventures) in June 2015 for construction of the Eagle Mountain Pumped Storage Hydroelectric Project. Eagle Crest received a 50-year license from the Federal Energy Regulatory Commission in June 2014 (Project No. 13123-002). If constructed, the project will occupy approximately 620 acres of federal land and 1,050 of private land within the study area. The public lands needed for the central portion of the pumped storage hydroelectric project were previously withdrawn from the operation of the public lands laws pursuant to the Federal Power Act. CIL&D, through a subsidiary (Eagle Mountain Mining and Railroad Company, LLC), has retained the railroad right-of-way assets associated with the mine and the right to sell above-ground iron ore tailings and rock from the property. This includes the extraction of rock and fine tailings from the waste rock piles remaining from previous mining activity but does not include any new extractive mining.

State and local agencies also own and/or manage land within the study area. The Metropolitan Water District of Southern California owns lands along the eastern boundary of the study area (approximately 2,800 acres) for purposes of managing the extensive Colorado River Aqueduct which supplies a significant amount of water to the greater Los Angeles metropolitan region. The study area also contains lands managed by the Desert Center Unified School District, which operates a school in the area. The State of California owns approximately 340 acres of State School Lands. The State School Lands were granted to California by Congress in 1853 to benefit public education.



Boundary Adjustment Criteria Findings

The boundary study/EA examines the cultural, historic, and natural significance of the study area lands to determine whether they contribute to the purpose of Joshua Tree National Park. The NPS evaluated the properties under consideration according to criteria set forth in NPS *Management Policies 2006*. For lands to be included in a boundary expansion, at least one of three criteria must be met.

The inclusion of the properties must:

- protect significant resources and values, or enhance opportunities for public enjoyment related to park purposes;
- address operational and management issues, such as the need for access or the need for boundaries to correspond to logical boundary delineations such as topographic features or roads; or
- otherwise protect park resources that are critical to fulfilling park purposes.

Those lands found suitable under the foregoing criteria must further meet the following two requirements:

- The added lands will be feasible to administer, considering size, configuration, and ownership; costs; the views of and impacts on local communities and surrounding jurisdictions; and other factors such as the presence of structures, hazardous substances, or nonnative species.
- Other alternatives for management and resource protection are not adequate.

Boundary Adjustment Criteria Evaluation Findings

Study area lands west of the Colorado River Aqueduct properties and right-of-way contain resources and public enjoyment opportunities related to the purpose of Joshua Tree National Park and are suitable for inclusion the park boundary. This includes approximately 28,600 acres of federal, private, and state lands. These properties contain important habitat, including migration corridors, whose conservation would provide for greater protection of Joshua Tree National Park's fundamental resources and values including desert tortoise habitat, biological diversity and healthy ecosystem function, and interconnectivity of California desert lands. Cultural resources within the area provide an excellent opportunity to protect and interpret historic and prehistoric resources that demonstrate the integral connection between desert ecosystems, land use, and human cultures. Study area resources such as the Eagle Mountain Mine and Townsite could expand on mining history themes currently interpreted at Joshua Tree National Park. Many of the lands associated with the mine and Townsite are currently closed to the public. However, if they became available for park management could provide important opportunities for public enjoyment and interpretation.

Despite visual disturbances from previous mining activities, much of the study area contains scenic landscapes visible from Joshua Tree National Park. Protection of lands adjacent to Joshua Tree National Park wilderness could benefit the natural and untrammeled character of the park's designated wilderness areas.

Adding these lands to Joshua Tree National Park could also improve operational efficiency through creation of a more logical boundary delineation and through providing NPS staff the opportunity to monitor and document the resources of the area.

"The purpose of Joshua Tree National Park is to preserve and protect the scenic, natural, and cultural resources representative of the Colorado and Mojave deserts' rich biological and geological diversity, cultural history, wilderness, recreational values, and outstanding opportunities for education and scientific study."

Feasibility Criteria Evaluation Findings

Lands determined suitable for inclusion in a park boundary under the first set of criteria must also be considered feasible for the park service to administer considering size, configuration, and ownership; costs; the views of and impacts on local communities and surrounding jurisdictions; and other factors such as the presence of structures, hazardous substances, or nonnative species.

Of the lands determined suitable for addition to Joshua Tree National Park, the study finds that approximately 25,070 acres of federal, state, and private lands would be considered feasible for NPS to administer as part of Joshua Tree National Park at this time. Including these resources in the park would help address current threats facing park resources, such as habitat fragmentation from regional development, and would help mitigate the effects of climate change on park resources.

Although some portions of the study area are not feasible for NPS management at this time given current and proposed uses (e.g. proposed Eagle Mountain Pumped Storage Hydroelectric Project area, the Townsite, and Eagle Mountain School), such areas (~3,530 acres) contain resources with cultural resource values and public enjoyment opportunities that would support park purpose. These lands are considered "potentially feasible" for NPS management. The NPS could consider inclusion of these lands in the park boundary in the event that current or planned uses change. Approximately 2,870 acres of lands necessary for the management and operation of the Colorado River Aqueduct are not considered a feasible addition to the park.

The study finds that operational costs for a boundary expansion of Joshua Tree National Park in the Eagle Mountain area would be feasible. Areas both feasible and potentially feasible would result in a 3.25-3.75% addition to overall park acreage. Most of the lands considered feasible at this time are federal lands which could be transferred to the NPS with little cost. Such lands contain few structures or facilities that the NPS would have to maintain. Additional costs for development would be dependent on management priorities and approaches identified through implementation planning and the location, size, and configuration of future land acquisition. Socioeconomic impacts on local communities would largely be beneficial. Location of new mining claims would be precluded. However existing rights would be upheld subject to NPS policies and regulations for mining in national parks.

Protection Alternatives Considered

The final criterion for a boundary adjustment requires that there are not adequate alternatives for the management and protection of resources related to the purpose of the park. The study finds that other means for resource protection in the Eagle Mountain area are not adequate for long-term protection of resources related to Joshua Tree National Park's purpose. Including lands in the Eagle Mountain area within the Joshua Tree National Park boundary would provide an opportunity to provide long-term comprehensive protection of the area and its resources (see *Alternative A: Continuation of Current Management - No Action* on page 6 for a description of existing uses and management policies). Without NPS management, the area would continue to be managed without a cohesive vision for protection or interpretive and educational opportunities, and it would remain open to incompatible uses. Given the configuration of the area in relationship to the park boundary, incompatible uses could have adverse impacts on park resources such as wildlife, water resources, and wilderness values. Including the study area lands within the national park also gives NPS the ability to conduct on-the-ground monitoring, inventories, and research. The NPS could also expend funds on restoration activities and facility improvements that could improve visitor access to the area.

Alternatives

The National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA) requires federal agencies to explore a range of reasonable alternatives aimed at addressing the purpose of and need for the proposed action. The alternatives analyzed in this boundary study/EA, in accordance with NEPA, are based on the National Park Service (NPS) boundary adjustment criteria analysis. The alternatives meet the overall purpose and need for the proposed action.

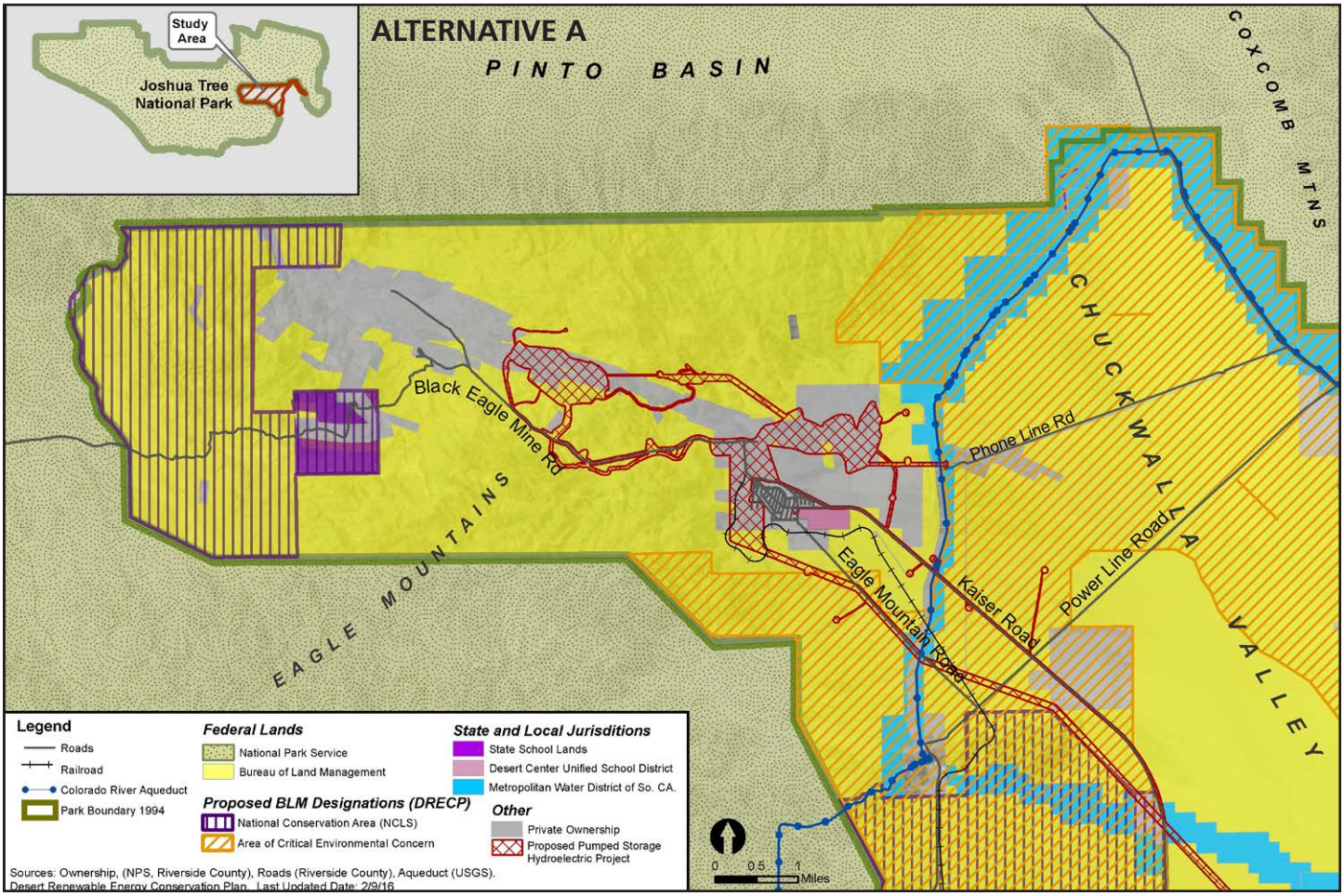
ALTERNATIVE A: Continue Current Management (No Action)

Under the No Action alternative, the park boundary of Joshua Tree National Park in the Eagle Mountain area would remain as it is today. More than half of the 31,500 acres under study would be open to resource intensive uses despite their proximity to one of the most pristine areas of the national park. No additional property would be included in the national park boundary, either by federal land transfer, donation, or through the use of appropriated funds.

Currently, the Bureau of Land Management (BLM)-managed federal lands within the study area fall within "limited" and "moderate" multiple use classes which allow a variety of allowable uses ranging from electric generation plants; gas, electric and transmission facilities and cables; communications sites; livestock grazing; mining; and low to moderate recreational activities as defined the *California Desert Conservation Area Plan,* as amended. While these activities may be allowed, the multiple use class determines the manner in which the activity is allowed. Within the "limited" multiple use class the land is managed to provide for lower-intensity, carefully controlled multiple use of resources, while ensuring that sensitive values are not significantly diminished. Within the "moderate" multiple use class the land is managed to provide a controlled balance between higher intensity use and providing protection of public lands.

The BLM's *Desert Renewable Energy Conservation Plan Proposed Land Use Plan Amendment, Phase 1* recognizes the national significance of the study area resources and proposes two separate BLM land use designations that would allow for greater protection the area's resources. Within these proposed designations, BLM would place a special emphasis on managing resources in a National Conservation Lands area and within portions of a Chuckwalla Area of Critical Environmental Concern to ensure that uses do not impact nationally significant resources. However, these proposed protective designations only apply to roughly half of the BLM-managed lands within the study area. The remaining areas would continue to be open to the uses described above. It should be noted that the Record of Decision for this plan has not yet been completed.

There would be no change in ownership of lands that are owned and managed by state and local agencies. Private land would continue to be either undeveloped or used for industrial purposes according to local planning and zoning ordinances.



ALTERNATIVE B: Federal Agency-to-Agency Land Transfer

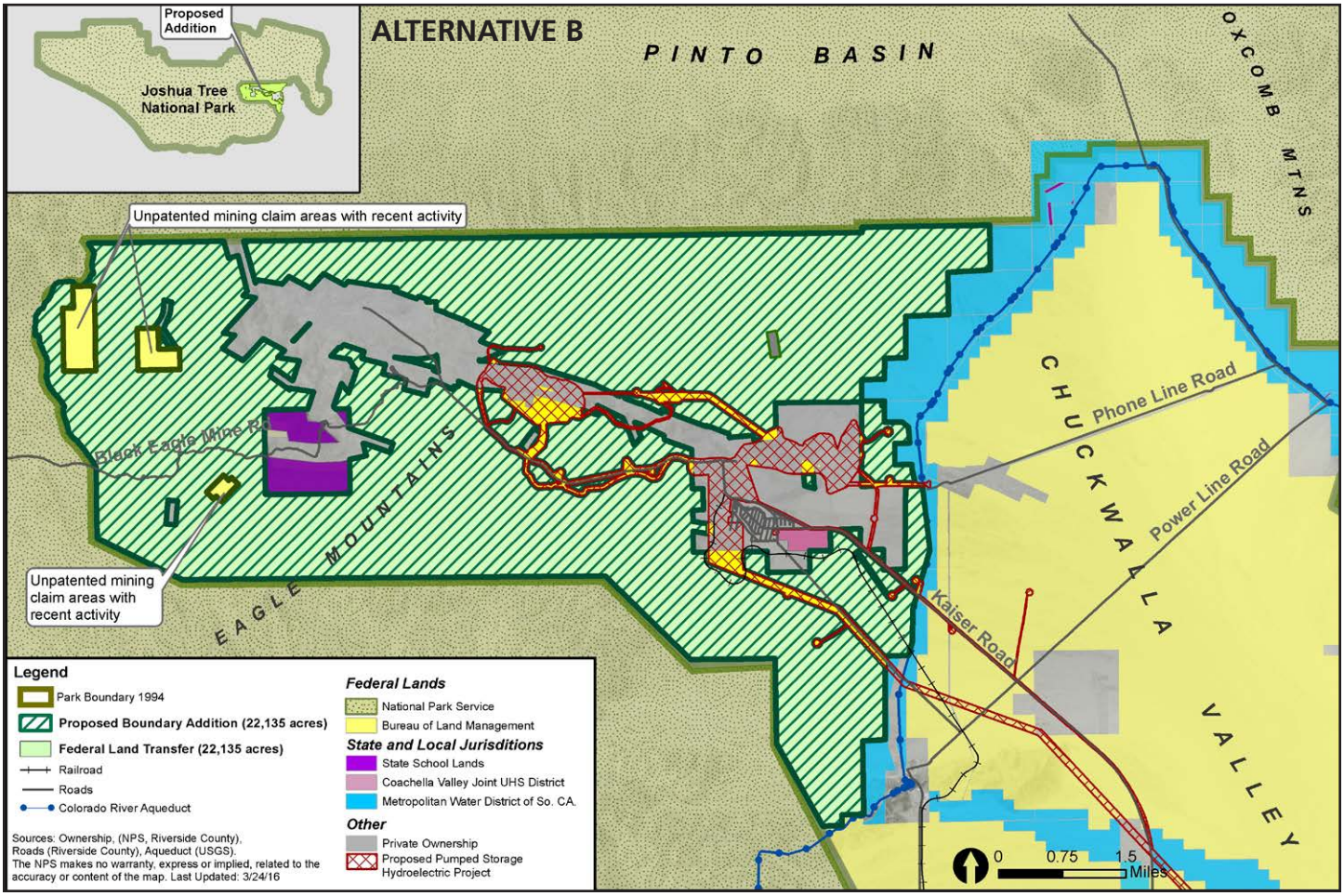
The Joshua Tree National Park boundary would be expanded to include approximately 22,135 acres of federal lands that would be transferred from the Bureau of Land Management (BLM) to the NPS for administration. All valid mineral rights would be retained by current claimants. Proposed transfer areas would not include BLM lands that have been previously withdrawn under the Federal Power Act for the proposed Eagle Mountain Pumped Storage Hydroelectric Project (620 acres). This project received a 50-year license from the Federal Energy Regulatory Commission ("FERC") in June 2014. The NPS acknowledges that the footprint of the pumped storage hydroelectric project on the maps is based on preliminary design, and that this may change through further design and construction. The NPS would work with Eagle Crest Energy Company to ensure that if a boundary adjustment were implemented, that the final project footprint would be considered in the configuration.

Private lands and state and county-owned lands would not be included in the boundary and would continue to be used for existing purposes. Approximately 380 acres of lands in areas with recently established and actively mined unpatented mining claims would remain under BLM jurisdiction. However, if the claims were willingly relinquished or were no longer active, the NPS could pursue a transfer of administration. Such areas would need further survey to confirm locations and claim status. In the course of the study one claim was closed while two new claims were established.

State, local, and privately owned lands are not included in this boundary adjustment alternative. Uses of these lands would continue to be determined by state agencies or local planning and zoning ordinances.

Including the federal lands in the national park boundary would provide the NPS the opportunity to protect the transferred lands in tandem with NPS-managed properties within Joshua Tree National Park. Benefits include protection from development, seamless protection of existing habitat, and restoration opportunities for disturbed lands that may provide greater landscape connectivity for wildlife such as desert bighorn sheep.

New visitor opportunities in the Eagle Mountains could be explored (e.g. backcountry hiking, night sky viewing, and informal camping). NPS could explore improvement of Black Eagle Mine Road for safer visitor and staff travel. Other facilities that could be explored include trails, or camping areas. Consideration would also be given to areas where interpretive signage could provide information about the area and its history.



ALTERNATIVE C: Agency Transfer with Enhanced Habitat Connectivity and Recreation (NPS Preferred Alternative and Proposed Action)

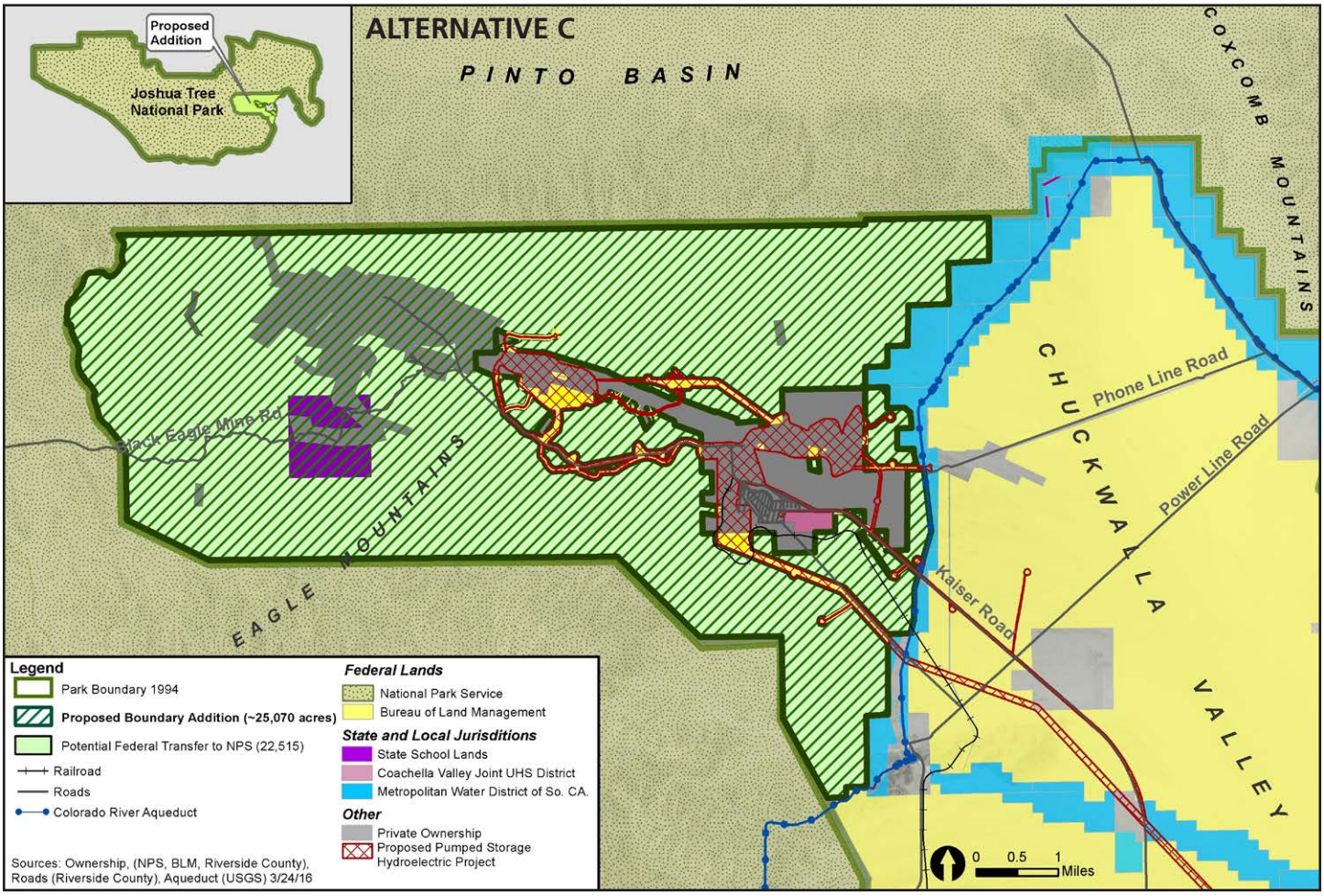
In Alternative C, the boundary of Joshua Tree National Park would be expanded by approximately 25,070 acres. This would include 22,515 acres of federally owned and managed lands that would be considered for administrative transfer to the National Park Service. Also included would be approximately 2,230 acres of privately owned lands, and 325 acres of State School Lands west of the FERC license withdrawal area that have been determined feasible for addition to Joshua Tree National Park.

The boundary adjustment would not affect valid existing rights. All valid mineral rights would be retained by current claimants. Private land could be acquired when available, through donation or purchase by a third party from a willing seller (in fee) and donated to NPS. Eagle Crest Energy Company has indicated that it would consider donating lands not needed for the pumped storage hydroelectric project to the National Park Service. State School Lands could be acquired through a land exchange with the California State Lands Commission. Alternative C is the NPS preferred alternative and the proposed action.

The proposed boundary addition would not include BLM-managed lands that have been previously withdrawn under the Federal Power Act for the Eagle Crest Energy Company's Eagle Mountain Pumped Storage Project. This project received a 50-year license from the Federal Energy Regulatory Commission (FERC) in June 2014. The NPS would work with Eagle Crest Energy Company to ensure that if a boundary adjustment were implemented, the final project footprint would be considered in the configuration.

This option could allow for greater protection of existing habitat, restoration opportunities, and landscape connectivity for wildlife such as bighorn sheep. Visitor opportunities would be similar to Alternative B. Public access would continue to be limited on private lands and to FERC energy license withdrawal lands. However, the NPS could explore with Eagle Crest Energy Company, opportunities to provide access from the private lands to the east where appropriate.

The long-term vision of the National Park Service would be to include in the park boundary all of the lands determined suitable for addition to Joshua Tree National Park. This would include an additional 3,530 acres that include the former Eagle Mountain Mine and Townsite, if existing uses of those lands change and subsequently become available to the NPS. Additional feasibility analysis environmental and environmental site assessments for these lands would likely be necessary at such time that they become available.



ALTERNATIVE D: Restore 1936 Boundary to Provide Diverse Visitor and Resource Protection Opportunities – Phased Approach

All areas west of the Metropolitan Water District of Southern California's aqueduct lands would be considered for inclusion in the Joshua Tree National Park boundary (approximately 28,600 acres), restoring lands that were removed from the NPS boundary in 1950. This boundary configuration represents a long-term vision to restore these lands to Joshua Tree National Park, providing an opportunity for comprehensive protection of the area's resources. Some lands, such as the FERC-licensed pumped storage hydroelectric project, may not be available for decades. Such lands could be acquired when they are no longer needed for these purposes. The boundary adjustment would be implemented through Congressional legislation. Designation would not affect private land ownership or valid existing rights such as the FERC-licensed proposed Eagle Mountain Pumped Storage Hydroelectric Project. Most NPS regulations and policies apply only to federal lands managed by NPS. Some regulations may apply to certain activities such as mining.

This option could offer the greatest potential for long term protection of existing habitat and enhancing landscape-scale connectivity and restoration for area wildlife, including desert bighorn sheep. It would also provide an opportunity to fully protect cultural landscapes associated with historic mining, including the Eagle Mountain Townsite if such lands were to become available. A wider range of visitor opportunities could occur with greater access and more lands potentially available for park use.

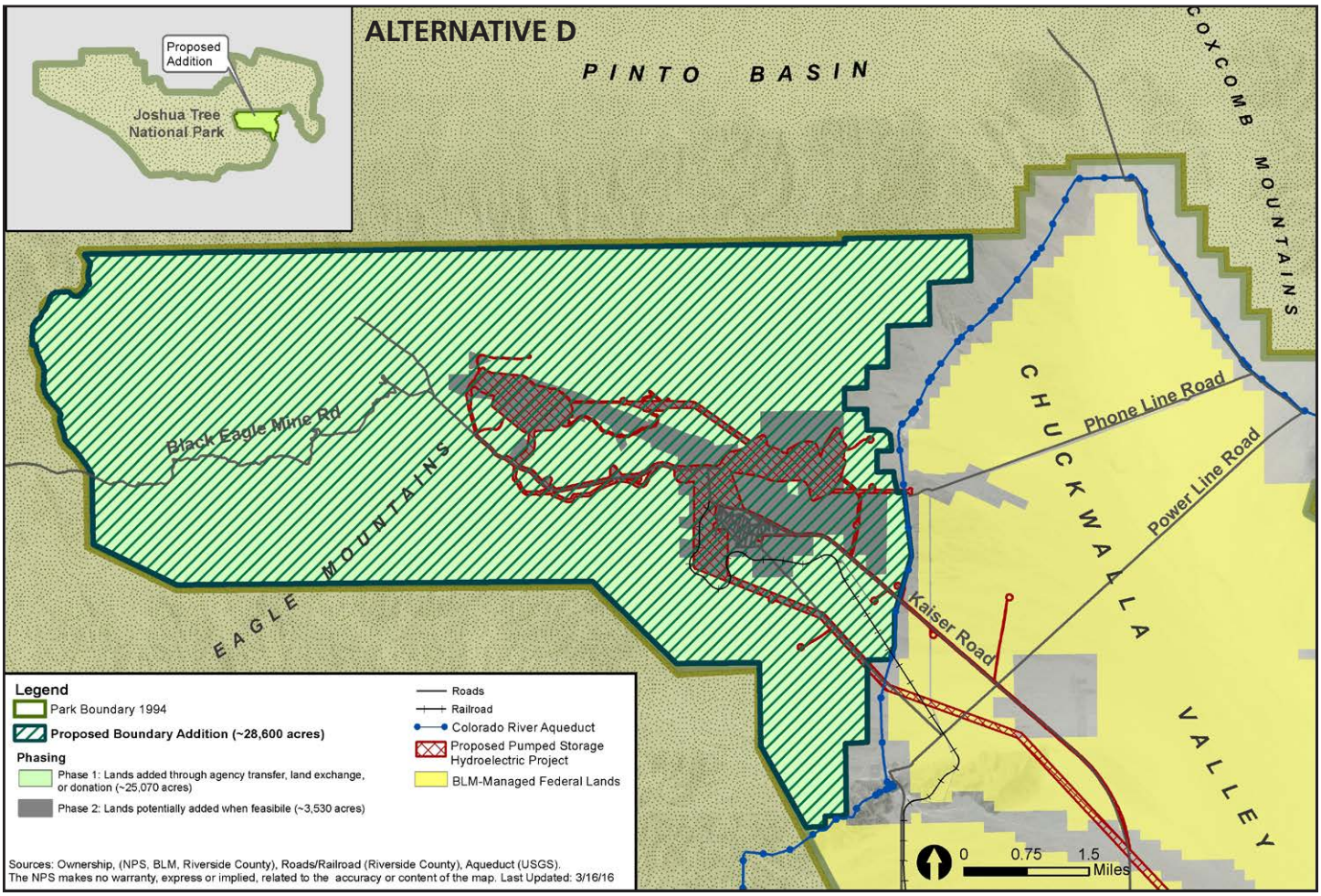
Phasing

Because not all lands are currently feasible for park management, NPS would implement a phased approach to land acquisition. Lands could be acquired by purchase from willing sellers, by land exchange, or by donation. Until such time that lands could be acquired by NPS, private, state, and locally owned lands would continue to be regulated by state and local authorities.

Phase 1 (~25,070 acres) would include: the transfer of approximately 22,515 acres of BLM-managed federal lands to NPS for administration as part of Joshua Tree National Park; approximately 2,230 acres of private lands west of the FERC-licensed withdrawal area; and State School Lands parcels (approximately 325 acres).

Phase 2 (~3,530 acres) would include all other lands determined potentially feasible, that could be acquired when current uses cease. This comprises lands associated with the proposed pumped storage hydroelectric project if at any time it is decommissioned; and lands formerly associated with the Eagle Mountain Mine and Townsite. These lands would be acquired only at such time as they become feasible for addition to the NPS.

Purchase of private lands would be from willing sellers only. Additional feasibility analysis for some lands may be necessary at such time that they become available to determine whether conditions have changed from the time of this study.



Environmental Consequences - Summary of Impacts

Four alternatives are analyzed for potential impacts to: natural, cultural, mineral, and visual resources; visitor opportunities and access; land use; park operations and socioeconomics. This analysis is the basis for comparing the advantages and disadvantages of the alternatives. Direct, indirect, and cumulative impacts were analyzed and described as beneficial or adverse. The following discussion summarizes the impacts of the alternatives considered, in accordance with the National Environmental Policy Act.

Impacts from Alternative A

In Alternative A, there would be no change to land use management or ownership in the study area. However, some restrictions to uses such as mining or energy development could result from approval and implementation of land use designations proposed by the Bureau of Land Management (BLM) in the *Desert Renewable Energy Conservation Plan* (DRECP). Cumulative adverse impacts to wildlife and special status wildlife species could occur from loss of habitat as a result of development projects in and around the study area. This creates the potential for numerous, long term, severe, adverse impacts to the health of wildlife. Bighorn sheep and desert tortoise movement corridors could be impeded, reducing gene flow and resulting in adverse effects to local populations. The continuation of existing land use policies in Alternative A could also result in the destruction or removal of prehistoric, historic, or archeological resources. There could be cumulative adverse effects to groundwater resources as future renewable energy projects are constructed in and adjacent to the study area. Existing visitor use and access would continue. However, no additional visitor programs or recreational opportunities would be offered. There would be no effect on park operations or the socioeconomic environment of the local area or county.

Impacts from Alternative B

In Alternative B, federal land use management would change with the transfer of administrative jurisdiction of approximately 22,135 acres of federal lands from the BLM to the NPS. Under NPS regulations and policies, renewable energy projects, new mining claims, and some visitor uses would be restricted, resulting in an adverse effect on these uses. Alternatively, these same changes would result in positive long term benefits from preservation of land with significant natural, cultural, scenic and scientific values. Existing mineral rights would be retained and mining activities on NPS-managed lands would be subject to NPS regulations under the Mining the Parks Act (36 CFR Part 9, Subpart A). Owners of six unpatented mining claim areas that are currently being mined would remain under BLM management, reducing the effects of NPS regulations on current use. Alternative B would benefit wildlife and cultural resources by preventing loss of resources from future development projects. NPS management would prioritize water conservation resulting in beneficial effects on groundwater resources. Scenic viewsheds would be preserved and protected. There would be no effect on mining or other land uses on private land such as the proposed Eagle Mountain Pumped Storage Hydroelectric Project. Alternative B would require additional NPS funding, staff, and management responsibilities; however, the ability to invest NPS resources to survey, study, and plan for park resources and mitigate safety hazards would be beneficial to operations. The existence of inholdings under other management authorities within national park boundaries would have an adverse effect on operations by increasing management complexity for both agencies. Socioeconomic effects would be largely beneficial as park visitors typically provide an economic benefit to the surrounding community; however, without new roads or access from Desert Center, visitation and socioeconomic benefits would be minimal.

Impacts from Alternative C

Similar to Alternative B, a change in federal land use management with a transfer of administrative jurisdiction of federal lands from the BLM to the NPS could have both beneficial and adverse effects to certain land use and visitor activities. Some visitor activities such as off-highway vehicle use and establishment of new mining claims would be limited and/or prohibited. However, new opportunities for visitors could also occur as a result of NPS management. Impacts to current mining activities on unpatented claims could be more greatly affected as result of NPS mining regulations. The effect on future commercial mining is small because no large scale mining occurs in the area now and there are no current plans pending for industrial mining on federal lands. The benefits to natural and cultural resources would be similar to Alternative B except that there would be an even greater level of preservation due to the additional land that would be protected. Groundwater resources would benefit from the additional land preservation and NPS water conservation measures. Effects on viewsheds would be similar to Alternative B, except greater since Alternative C would preserve viewsheds on an additional ~3,000 acres of land. The more contiguous park boundary in Alternative C would result in consistency in the application of land use policies for the area having a beneficial effect on park management and operations over Alternative B.

Impacts from Alternative D

In the near term, impacts from Alternative D would be the same as those described for Alternative C. However, in the long-term, if fully implemented, Alternative D could result in the greatest benefits to natural and cultural resources because over time most study area lands would be managed by the NPS for resource protection and public enjoyment. The advantages of comprehensive land and resource management by NPS would be great as large areas of protected open space would facilitate protection of key wildlife corridors and other landscape-scale values. Beneficial effects on cultural resources could result from the possible adaptive re-use and/or interpretation of structures associated with the Eagle Mountain Mine and Townsite structures if they became available. Alternative D could make park operations and management more complex in some ways, and simpler in others. It would incorporate lands with considerable infrastructure to maintain which could result in increased costs. However, it would also provide the most opportunities for comprehensive protection of resources as well as expanded recreation and visitor use.

How to Comment on the Boundary Study / Environmental Assessment

The public comment period for the Eagle Mountain boundary study /environmental assessment will extend through **May 27, 2016.**

We encourage you to review the document and welcome your comments. During the comment period, comments may be submitted using several methods:

1) We prefer that readers submit comments online at the Eagle Mountain Boundary Study project website at:

http://parkplanning.nps.gov/eaglemountain; or

2) Letters may be sent to:

Superintendent
Joshua Tree National Park - Eagle Mountain Study
74485 National Park Drive
Twentynine Palms, CA 92277-3597

E-mail: jotr_study@nps.gov

In addition, comments may be made in person or submitted in writing at the upcoming public meetings.

A limited number of additional paper copies of the full report are available by request from the above e-mail address. The full report is also available for viewing and downloading at project website listed above.

Public Meeting Schedule

The NPS will host a series of public meetings in Spring 2016 to share information and listen to comments. In addition, an online meeting will be conducted via the Internet. Please visit the study website for more information on how to participate in the online meeting: http://parkplanning.nps.gov/eaglemountain

A separate public meeting will be scheduled in the future to specifically discuss the possible withdrawal and potential transfer of administrative jurisdiction of federal lands within the study area. This meeting will be announced through a Federal Register notice and through notice to those on the mailing list for this study.

Online Meeting
April 29, 2016 • 1-2:30 pm
Pacific Standard Time
See study website for more information.

Desert Center, CA
May 3, 2016 • 1-3 pm
Lake Tamarisk Community Center
26-251 Parkview Dr

Palm Desert, CA
May 3, 2016 • 6-8 pm
University of California, Riverside - Palm Desert Center
Second Floor, Rm B200
75080 Frank Sinatra Drive

Joshua Tree, CA
May 4, 2016 • 6-8 pm
Joshua Tree Community Center (Elliott Hall)
6171 Sunburst Street

Please note that our practice is to make comments, including names, home addresses, home phone numbers, and email addresses of respondents, available for public review. Individual respondents may request that we withhold their names and/or home addresses, etc., but if you wish us to consider withholding this information you must state this prominently at the beginning of your comments. In addition, you must present a rationale for withholding this information. This rationale must demonstrate that disclosure would constitute a clearly unwarranted invasion of privacy. Unsupported assertions will not meet this burden. In the absence of exceptional, documentable circumstances, this information will be released. We will always make submissions from organizations or businesses, and from individuals identifying themselves as representatives of or officials of organizations or businesses, available for public inspection in their entirety.

Boundary Study Schedule

Estimated Time Frame	Planning Activity	Public Involvement Opportunities
Summer 2015	**Conduct Public Scoping** • Share information about the study process • Identify issues and information that need to be addressed in the study	• Review Newsletter 1 • Send us your ideas and concerns • Participate in public meetings and voice your ideas and concerns with the planning team
Fall 2015 - Winter 2016	**Prepare Boundary Study / Environmental Assessment.** Complete boundary adjustment criteria analysis and develop alternatives based on comments from the public, park partners, government agencies, and other stakeholders.	
Spring 2016	**Distribute Boundary Study / Environmental Assessment for Public Review** ***WE ARE HERE**	• Review boundary study/EA or summary newsletter • Send us your written comments on the boundary study/EA • Participate in public meetings and voice your ideas and concerns
Summer 2016	**Complete Study** • Evaluate comments • Prepare and issue a Finding of No Significant Impact with selected alternative identified	• Review final documents on study website

Joshua Tree National Park

Eagle Mountain Boundary Study/Environmental Assessment

Newsletter #2, Public Review - Environmental Assessment, Spring 2016

Superintendent
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