



APPENDIX V

**AREAS OF CRITICAL ENVIRONMENTAL
CONCERN (ACEC) EVALUATIONS**

APPENDIX V

AREAS OF CRITICAL ENVIRONMENTAL CONCERN (ACEC) EVALUATIONS

Area Considered: Coffeepot-Batamote

General location	T.11S. R.6, 5, 4 & 3W. (portions of) T.12S. R.4 W. (portions of)
General description	Sonoran desert ecosystem. Contains many wooded washes and boulder areas for candidate species. Contains foraging areas for endangered lesser long-nosed bat. Contains significant cultural artifacts.
Acreage	63,400 acres
Values considered	Wildlife, Natural process or system, Cultural resources

Identification Criteria

To be considered as a potential ACEC and analyzed in RMP alternatives, an area must meet the criteria of relevance and importance, as established in 43 CFR 1610.7-2.

Relevance: *There shall be present a "significant" historic, cultural, or scenic value; a fish or wildlife resource or other natural system or process; or natural hazard. This generally means that the value, resource, system, process, or hazard is characterized by one or more of the following:*

Relevance Value	Yes/No	Rational for Determination
A significant historic, cultural, or scenic value (including but not limited to rare or sensitive archeological resources and religious or cultural resources important to Native Americans).	Yes	The area is of significant cultural importance as it is adjacent to the Tohono O'odham Nation and is part of their traditional homelands. In addition, a broad variety of cultural sites dating from the Middle Archaic period, thousands of years ago, to the late 19th century are represented in this area. The density of sites is greater in these areas than in the surrounding areas. One of the most important prehistoric obsidian sources for tool materials is located in this area.
A fish and wildlife resource (including but not limited to habitat for endangered, sensitive, or threatened species; or habitat essential for maintaining species diversity).	Yes	Area contains habitat for the Sonoran desert tortoise. All three habitat types are within the ACEC. Category I, II, and III. Also contains habitat for the sensitive species cactus ferruginous pygmy owl and foraging habitat for the endangered lesser long-nosed bat.
A natural process or system (including but not limited to endangered, sensitive, or threatened plant species; rare, endemic, or relict plants or plant communities which are terrestrial, aquatic, or riparian; or rare geological features).	Yes	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Acuna cacti are Restricted to well drained knolls and gravel ridges between major washes in Sonoran desertscrub habitat. Acuna cacti are found on granite substrates on rounded small hills at elevations ranging from 397 to 610 m (1300-2000 ft). Elevation is a limiting factor.

Area Considered: Coffeepot-Batamote

		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> The area also contains all three habitats for the desert tortoise as well as habitat for the cactus ferruginous pygmy owl.
<p>Natural hazards (including but not limited to areas of avalanche, dangerous flooding, landslides, unstable soils, seismic activity, or dangerous cliffs). A hazard caused by human action may meet the relevance criteria if it is determined through the resource management planning process that it has become part of a natural process.</p>	No	No natural hazards are known to occur.

Importance Criteria

Importance: The value, resource, system, process, or hazard described above must have substantial significance and values to satisfy the “importance” criteria. This generally requires qualities of more than local significance and special worth, consequence, meaning, distinctiveness or cause for concern. A natural hazard can be important if it is a significant threat to human life or property.

Importance Value	Yes/No	Rationale for Determination
<p>Has more than locally significant qualities, which give it special worth, consequence, meaning, distinctiveness, or cause for concern, especially compared to any similar resource.</p>	Yes	<p>The area is of significant cultural importance as it is adjacent to the Tohono O’odham Nation and is part of their traditional homelands. In addition, a broad variety of cultural sites dating from the Middle Archaic period, thousands of years ago, to the late 19th century is represented in this area. The density of sites is greater in these areas than in the surrounding areas. One of the most important prehistoric obsidian sources for tool materials is located in this area.</p>
<p>Has qualities or circumstances that make it fragile, sensitive, rare, irreplaceable, exemplary, unique, endangered, threatened, or vulnerable to adverse change.</p>	Yes	<p>The Coffee Pot-Batamote Area is an important part of a larger intact wildlife habitat area, which spans the Sand Tanks area of the Barry M. Goldwater Range and Sonoran Desert National Monument. This entire area provides important opportunities to maintain quality habitat for a wide variety of wildlife, particularly for populations requiring large ranges. It also contains Category I desert tortoise habitat which BLM is committed to maintain at no net loss and habitat for the maintenance and recovery of the candidate cactus-ferruginous pygmy owl and Acuña cactus. Stands of saguaro cactus provide foraging habitat for the endangered lesser long-nosed bat. Washes located within the proposed ACEC contains suitable habitat for the candidate cactus ferruginous pygmy-owl.</p>

Area Considered: Coffeepot-Batamote

Has been recognized as warranting protection to satisfy national priority concerns or to carry out the mandates of FLPMA.	Yes	BLM is mandated to protect threatened, endangered, and candidate species and their habitats under the ESA.
Has qualities that warrant highlighting to satisfy public or management concerns about safety and public welfare.	No	No qualities were identified.
Poses a significant threat to human life and safety or to property.	No	No threats have been identified.

Area Considered: Cuerda de Lena

General location	T.13S. R. 6 & 5 W. (portions of) and T14S. R.6 & 5 W. (portions of)
General description	Sonoran desert ecosystem
Acreage	59,300 acres
Values considered	Wildlife, Natural process or system, Cultural resources

Identification Criteria

To be considered as a potential ACEC and analyzed in RMP alternatives, an area must meet the criteria of relevance and importance, as established in 43 CFR 1610.7-2.

Relevance: *There shall be present a “significant” historic, cultural, or scenic value; a fish or wildlife resource or other natural system or process; or natural hazard. This generally means that the value, resource, system, process, or hazard is characterized by one or more of the following:*

Relevance Value	Yes/No	Rational for Determination
A significant historic, cultural, or scenic value (including but not limited to rare or sensitive archeological resources and religious or cultural resources important to Native Americans).	Yes	The area is of significant cultural importance as it is adjacent to the Tohono O’odham Nation and is part of their traditional homelands. In addition, a broad variety of cultural sites dating from the Middle Archaic period, thousands of years ago, to the late 19th century are represented in this area. The density of sites is greater in these areas than in the surrounding areas. One of the most important prehistoric obsidian sources for tool materials is located in this area.
A fish and wildlife resource (including but not limited to habitat for endangered, sensitive, or threatened species; or habitat essential for maintaining species diversity).	Yes	The area is only area within the Lower Sonoran Field Office that is managed for the endangered Sonoran pronghorn antelope. There are currently Sonoran pronghorn that take up residence on public lands within the proposed bounds of the ACEC. The proposed ACEC also contains suitable and occupied habitat for the Candidate species Cactus ferruginous pygmy-owl.
A natural process or system (including but not limited to endangered, sensitive, or threatened	Yes	The area contains Saguaro cactus forest situations which are foraging habitat for the

Area Considered: Cuerda de Lena

<p>plant species; rare, endemic, or relict plants or plant communities which are terrestrial, aquatic, or riparian; or rare geological features).</p>		<p>endangered lesser long-nosed bat. The proposed ACEC also contains suitable and occupied habitat for the Candidate species Cactus ferruginous pygmy-owl. The proposed ACEC contains important fawning, breeding, loafing and foraging habitat for the Sonoran pronghorn.</p>
<p>Natural hazards (including but not limited to areas of avalanche, dangerous flooding, landslides, unstable soils, seismic activity, or dangerous cliffs). A hazard caused by human action may meet the relevance criteria if it is determined through the resource management planning process that it has become part of a natural process.</p>	<p>No</p>	<p>No natural hazards are known to occur.</p>

Importance Criteria

Importance: The value, resource, system, process, or hazard described above must have substantial significance and values to satisfy the “importance” criteria. This generally requires qualities of more than local significance and special worth, consequence, meaning, distinctiveness or cause for concern. A natural hazard can be important if it is a significant threat to human life or property.

Importance Value	Yes/No	Rationale for Determination
<p>Has more than locally significant qualities, which give it special worth, consequence, meaning, distinctiveness, or cause for concern, especially compared to any similar resource.</p>	<p>Yes</p>	<p>The area is of significant cultural importance as it is adjacent to the Tohono O’odham Nation and is part of their traditional homelands. In addition, a broad variety of cultural sites dating from the Middle Archaic period, thousands of years ago, to the late 19th century is represented in this area. The density of sites is greater in these areas than in the surrounding areas. One of the most important prehistoric obsidian sources for tool materials is located in this area.</p>
<p>Has qualities or circumstances that make it fragile, sensitive, rare, irreplaceable, exemplary, unique, endangered, threatened, or vulnerable to adverse change.</p>	<p>Yes</p>	<p>The proposed Cuerda de Lena ACEC contains significant wildlife resources, including priority habitat for three endangered (priority) species - Sonoran pronghorn, lesser long-nosed bat, and the cactus ferruginous pygmy-owl. The area is identified was proposed as critical habitat for the cactus ferruginous pygmy-owl and includes a proposed recovery area for the cactus ferruginous pygmy-owl. The area provides important fawning habitat for the Sonoran pronghorn. Several large washes provide suitable cactus ferruginous pygmy owl habitat. The area provides foraging habitat for the endangered lesser long nosed bat and includes</p>

Area Considered: Cuerda de Lena

		habitat for special status (priority) species including the Sonoran desert tortoise and rosy boa. There is a strong cultural resource component associated with this area because the area is part of the traditional Tohono O’odham homeland and contains much important information about prehistoric settlement and subsistence. The area is popular with local residents and seasonal winter visitors from around the United States and Canada for dispersed recreation including camping and sightseeing.
Has been recognized as warranting protection to satisfy national priority concerns or to carry out the mandates of FLPMA.	Yes	BLM is mandated to protect threatened, endangered, and candidate species and their habitats under the ESA.
Has qualities that warrant highlighting to satisfy public or management concerns about safety and public welfare.	No	No threats have been identified.
Poses a significant threat to human life and safety or to property.	No	No threats have been identified.

Area Considered: Gila River Terraces and Lower Gila Historic Trails

General location	T.05S. R.9, 8, 7, 6, 5, 4 & 3W. (portions of) T.04S. R.9, 8, 7, 6, 5, 4 W. (portions of) T.03S. R. 5, 4 W. (portions of) T.02S. R. 5 W. (portions of) T.01S. R. 5, 4, 3, 2 W. (portions of) T.04S. R. 1, 2 W. (portions of)
General description	Historic trails and petroglyphs along the lower Gila River to Yuma County
Acreage	63,400 acres
Values considered	Cultural, Archaeological, Historic Trails

Identification Criteria

To be considered as a potential ACEC and analyzed in RMP alternatives, an area must meet the criteria of relevance and importance, as established in 43 CFR 1610.7-2.

Relevance: There shall be present a “significant” historic, cultural, or scenic value; a fish or wildlife resource or other natural system or process; or natural hazard. This generally means that the value, resource, system, process, or hazard is characterized by one or more of the following:

Relevance Value	Yes/No	Rational for Determination
A significant historic, cultural, or scenic value (including but not limited to rare or sensitive archeological resources and religious or cultural resources important to Native Americans).	Yes	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> The trails and associated landscapes in this area have national significance as they are part of an important story about the peoples that have lived in, traveled through, and influenced the trail area. As well, the trails and landscapes inform us about the broader story of southwestern and transcontinental settlement,

Area Considered: Gila River Terraces and Lower Gila Historic Trails

		<p>communications, and development. The cultural sites along the Gila River also have regional significance as they help to tell the story of the southwest’s indigenous peoples.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Occupation and use of the Gila River terraces and trails spanned thousands of years evidenced by extensive prehistoric village sites and petroglyph sites, as well as associated canals, farmsteads, intaglios, small camp sites, and trails. Historic uses included dams, water diversion features, trails, graves, stage station, corrals, and historic mines. At least 250 sites have been recorded within the ACEC boundary and are managed under a variety of jurisdictions. • Humans occupied this area beginning in the Archaic Period, nearly 8,000 to 10,000 years ago as evidenced by the use of distinctive stone tools, including projectile points. By 300 B.C. the archaeological evidence begins to show the use of ceramic vessels and cultivation of corn. Along the Salt and Gila Rivers, the Hohokam tradition was born, and is now recognized by their high level of sophisticated canal systems, used for irrigated cultivation of corn, beans, squash, and cotton. Their pottery was often a buff color and decorated forms showed an exceptional artistry rendered in red on buff. Hohokam thrived in the area until the late 13th century, when they were forced to relocate to land with more abundant water supplies. • The area of the Gila River within the proposed ACEC was located on the periphery of the core area of the Hohokam tradition, but happened to be situated where major travel corridors developed. • People from the Yuma / lower Colorado River region, called the Patayan, began to appear in the area by the first millennium A.D. The Patayan did not practice irrigation,
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Area Considered: Gila River Terraces and Lower Gila Historic Trails

		<p>but can be recognized by their pottery, a thin, buff colored type fired harder and polished. First the Desert Archaic and then the Patayan and Hohokam cultures contributed to the petroglyphs.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • A variety of cultural sites are concentrated along the basalt mesas and terraces overlooking the Gila River. The area represents an unstudied instance: an amalgamation of elements from several archaeological cultures. • In addition, the ACEC encloses an historic travel corridor with portions of the Juan Bautista de Anza National Historic Trail, Butterfield Overland Mail Route, Mormon Battalion Trail, and the Gila Trail following the same course along the Gila River floodplain. • More recently, these trails and river corridors served explorers, emigrants, commercial mail and freight companies, and the military during the 18th and 19th century western expansion. In 1775, Captain Juan Bautista de Anza traveled from Tubac, Arizona to California. The Juan Bautista de Anza National Historic Trail commemorates this passage. In 1858, the Butterfield Stage Line travelled the area, preceded by the 1846 Mormon Battalion and California 49er gold rush traffic. • While much of this ACEC has not been systematically studied, there are some recent archaeological investigations by recognized experts that support a long held supposition that this area along the Gila River terraces were occupied by a great many people over a long period of time. Henry D. Wallace (1989), writes, “For the western desert in particular, water plays a very important role in determining the patterning of prehistoric settlement and activities.” • One study, entitled An Archaeological
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Area Considered: Gila River Terraces and Lower Gila Historic Trails

		<p>Survey of Enterprise Ranch, Maricopa County, Arizona, was written in 2007 by Glen Rice, et al, a well-known expert on Hohokam archaeology. Dr. Rice's crew inventoried 2,740 acres of private land known as the Enterprise Ranch, which is adjacent to BLM lands. A total of 12 sites were recorded, eight of which have the characteristics which would make them eligible for the National Register of Historic Places (NRHP). Four sites are large, complex village sites with ballcourts, compound walls, trash mounds, houses, and plaza areas. Three sites are smaller residential sites or farmsteads with buried features. Three sites are prehistoric work camps. One site has historic trash and possible historic flood control dam. The remaining sites are small, artifact scatters and possible camps. Almost all of the sites date to the Colonial and Sedentary Periods of Hohokam tradition, roughly AD 750-1150. Two petroglyph sites were recorded off the edge of this study area.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Another important cultural resource investigation was documented in the report entitled Archaeological Investigations at Petroglyph Sites in the Painted Rock Reservoir Area, Southwestern Arizona, by Henry D. Wallace (1989), noted archaeologist specializing in rock art. This study focused on the petroglyph sites that occur within proximity of the Gila River between Gila Bend and the Painted Rock Dam. A total of 40 petroglyph sites were recorded in the area along the Gila River between Red Rock Canyon and Painted Rock Dam. The more than 53 known cultural sites in this particular study area along the Gila River range from petroglyph sites to prehistoric trail segments to artifact scatters. • The research potential in this proposed ACEC is unmatched. This is a large body of
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Area Considered: Gila River Terraces and Lower Gila Historic Trails

		<p>unique cultural resource data because of the number and complexity of the sites present.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> The Gila River terraces and the historic trails along the Lower Gila River contain a significant collection of historic, cultural, archeological, and scenic values. Upon searching the archival map collection here in the Phoenix District Office, it is estimated that 250 cultural sites have been recorded to date within the ACEC boundary.
<p>A fish and wildlife resource (including but not limited to habitat for endangered, sensitive, or threatened species; or habitat essential for maintaining species diversity).</p>	<p>No</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Small parts of this ACEC proposal provide dispersed habitat for quail, dove, deer, and a variety of other wildlife species. In 1954, a segregation order on the Fred J. Weiler Greenbelt withdrew a total of 62,735 acres under Public Land Order 1015 for wildlife habitat. The Gila River terraces corridor and trails area provides habitats for resident and migratory wildlife, but its overall contribution to habitat diversity and connectivity is minor. It does provide some connectivity to upland habitats and movement up and down the Gila River. Along riparian stretches of the corridor, mourning and white-winged doves, Gambel's quail, coyote, desert cottontail and black-tailed jackrabbit are found, along with javelina, mule deer, and bobcat. Resident songbirds include black and Say's phoebes, ash-throated flycatcher, loggerhead shrike, phainopepla, verdin, cactus, rock and canyon wrens, black-tailed gnatcatcher, crissal thrasher, Abert's towhee, and black-throated sparrow. In winter, species include sparrows and blackbirds. Birds of prey are present during the fall and winter.
<p>A natural process or system (including but not limited to endangered, sensitive, or threatened plant species; rare, endemic, or relict plants or</p>	<p>No</p>	<p>Not applicable.</p>

Area Considered: Gila River Terraces and Lower Gila Historic Trails

plant communities which are terrestrial, aquatic, or riparian; or rare geological features).		
Natural hazards (including but not limited to areas of avalanche, dangerous flooding, landslides, unstable soils, seismic activity, or dangerous cliffs). A hazard caused by human action may meet the relevance criteria if it is determined through the resource management planning process that it has become part of a natural process.	No	Not applicable.

Importance Criteria

Importance: The value, resource, system, process, or hazard described above must have substantial significance and values to satisfy the “importance” criteria. This generally requires qualities of more than local significance and special worth, consequence, meaning, distinctiveness or cause for concern. A natural hazard can be important if it is a significant threat to human life or property.

Importance Value	Yes/No	Rationale for Determination
Has more than locally significant qualities, which give it special worth, consequence, meaning, distinctiveness, or cause for concern, especially compared to any similar resource.	Yes	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> The ACEC’s basalt boulder terraces contain extensive examples of petroglyphs in the region. These petroglyph panels are a unique and irreplaceable part of America’s national heritage that requires increased protection to prevent looting and vandalism. These river terraces and trails are part of important stories about prehistoric and historic development of the American nation. The trails were used prehistorically as important trade and travel routes for Native Americans. In historic times, these trails were used by explorers, emigrants, commercial mail and freight companies, and the military during the 18th and 19th century Anglo and Hispanic western expansion.
Has qualities or circumstances that make it fragile, sensitive, rare, irreplaceable, exemplary, unique, endangered, threatened, or vulnerable to adverse change.	Yes	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> A wide diversity of significant prehistoric cultural sites are found along the Gila River, which supported robust cultures as a reliable source of water. The density of sites is higher than many surrounding areas, and includes extensive and important prehistoric petroglyph sites, village sites, canals, trails, and associated sites. The sites date from the Late Archaic, more than two thousand years ago, to the late 19th century. Many of these sites have the

Area Considered: Gila River Terraces and Lower Gila Historic Trails

		<p>characteristics essential for a site to be eligible for the National Register of Historic Places.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Sites are at risk due to the increased urbanization and encroachment and associated increase in activities on the public lands. The area’s cultural values are exceedingly delicate and vulnerable to impacts from other land uses such as recreational OHV, mineral material sales, mining and rights-of-way. Inundation, vandalism, boulder displacement, farmland encroachment, target shooting, erosion, trash accumulation, soil deposition, and unauthorized collection are some of the most common threats to these resources.
<p>Has been recognized as warranting protection to satisfy national priority concerns or to carry out the mandates of FLPMA.</p>	<p>Yes</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> FLPMA directs BLM to manage the public lands “in a manner that will protect the quality of scientific, scenic, historical, ecological, environmental, air and atmospheric, water resource, and archeological values.” The relevance and importance of this ACEC proposal illustrates this area’s extensive cultural resource values. The potential for impacts to the ACEC’s archaeological features and the Fred J. Weiler Greenbelt, make this ACEC a BLM management priority. The petroglyph panels and other cultural resource features are vulnerable to vandalism, looting, and impacts from other land uses. The ACEC’s proximity to growing communities increases the likelihood of recreational damage occurring to cultural resources. Increased use of the Gila River terraces and historic trails by indiscriminate OHV travel, target shooters, unauthorized collection of natural and cultural resources, vandalism, and rock and quarry saleable mineral material operations could disturb or destroy significant cultural sites and represent a major threat to the cultural and

Area Considered: Gila River Terraces and Lower Gila Historic Trails

		historic trail resources. For example, the use and ownership of OHVs in the Phoenix metropolitan area and throughout the terraces and trail corridors is expected to grow dramatically over the life of the plan. Moreover, over 100,000 new homes are platted near the area as communities southward (Gila Bend) and northward (Buckeye) look forward for rapid growth as economic expansion returns to the region.
Has qualities that warrant highlighting to satisfy public or management concerns about safety and public welfare.	No	Not applicable.
Poses a significant threat to human life and safety or to property.	No	Not applicable.

Area Considered: Saddle Mountain

General location	T.10N. R. 8 & 7 W. (portions of) and T.10S. R.8 & 7 W. (portions of)
General description	A 55,000+ acre block of Sonoran Desert public lands in western Maricopa County, west of Phoenix
Acreage	55,600 acres
Values considered	Cultural, Wildlife, Scenic, Geology, Education, Sensitive Status Species

Identification Criteria

To be considered as a potential ACEC and analyzed in RMP alternatives, an area must meet the criteria of relevance and importance, as established in 43 CFR 1610.7-2.

Relevance: *There shall be present a "significant" historic, cultural, or scenic value; a fish or wildlife resource or other natural system or process; or natural hazard. This generally means that the value, resource, system, process, or hazard is characterized by one or more of the following:*

Relevance Value	Yes/No	Rational for Determination
A significant historic, cultural, or scenic value (including but not limited to rare or sensitive archeological resources and religious or cultural resources important to Native Americans).	Yes	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Saddle Mountain is a volcanic landscape containing unique archaeological sites, wildlife habitat, interpretive geology, and dramatic scenery. Recognized by travelers for thousands of years, Saddle Mountain is a distinctive landmark located on the fringe of metropolitan Phoenix, Arizona--60 miles west of downtown. The mountain towers 2,000 feet above the Harquahala Plain at an altitude of 3,037 feet above sea level.
	Yes	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> The area contains a rich diversity of significant cultural sites. The density of sites is higher than many surrounding areas, and

Area Considered: Saddle Mountain

		<p>includes important prehistoric petroglyph, rock shelter, and geoglyph sites. The sites date from the Middle Archaic, several thousand years ago, to the middle of the 19th century. At least five sites have the characteristics essential for a site to be eligible for the National Register of Historic Places. Sites are at risk due to the increased urbanization and encroachment and associated increase in recreation and commercial activities on the public lands.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Saddle Mountain and the Palo Verde Hills region share a history spanning thousands of years of prehistoric cultures that inhabited the deserts of western Arizona. Converging washes and uplands provided the Palo Verde Hills and Saddle Mountain area with an arboreal environment, creating stands of mesquite, ironwood, and Palo Verde trees. This environment provided sources of food and cover. Plus, both areas offered opportunities for hunting deer and bighorn sheep along with smaller game animals. An overview of cultures associated with this Saddle Mountain site stretch from Middle Archaic traditions of the Amargosa to the later Patayan, Hakataya, and Hohokam to more recent historic Yavapai and lastly, to the historic Anglo American. • The volcanic upthrust of the mountain has created a highly visual and scenic example of geologic forces. Cliffs, spires, and buttes tinted by andesite, rhyolite, and basalt result in magnificent scenery. Colorful minerals scattered the northern skirt of the mountain. The mountain's pyroclastic rocks, distilled by eons of differential erosion account for the dramatic scenery and multicolored strata witnessed today. This scenery is viewed by thousands of motorists traveling on Interstate 10 each day.
<p>A fish and wildlife resource (including but not limited to habitat for endangered, sensitive, or</p>	<p>Yes</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • This area provides habitat to a number of big game species, including big horn sheep,

Area Considered: Saddle Mountain

<p>threatened species; or habitat essential for maintaining species diversity).</p>		<p>javelina and mule deer, habitat essential for maintaining species complexity and diversity. The area provides habitat for BLM sensitive species, including the Sonoran desert tortoise, and nesting habitat for a variety of raptor species. Much of the area is Category II desert tortoise habitat.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> The distinctive Saddle Mountain landform offers desert bighorn sheep habitat and an associated lambing area, augmented by a water tank developed through the cooperative efforts of the Desert Bighorn Sheep Society, the Arizona Game and Fish Department, and BLM. Foliage creates a habitat valuable to a range of wildlife in the Palo Verde Hills, including the aforementioned desert tortoise, and approximately 162 other species. Important or special status species within the area include Gila monster, kit fox, Cooper's hawk, and sharp-shinned hawk. Additionally, prairie falcons and golden eagles are found in the upper reaches of Saddle Mountain.
<p>A natural process or system (including but not limited to endangered, sensitive, or threatened plant species; rare, endemic, or relict plants or plant communities which are terrestrial, aquatic, or riparian; or rare geological features).</p>	<p>Yes</p>	<p>The mountain's pyroclastic rocks, coupled with millenniums of erosion and weathering, account for good rock specimen hunting, a Saddle Mountain pursuit known throughout the southwest in rock collection circles. One result of Saddle Mountain's complex volcanic history has been the colorful minerals scattered the northern skirt of the mountain. However, the once plentiful fire agate, chalcedony, and calcite "desert roses" have become scarce due to over-collection. The mountain's pyroclastic rocks, distilled by eons of differential erosion, account for the multicolored strata that we see today. The mountain's pyroclastic rocks offer potential geological interpretation; nearly every type of volcanic and pyroclastic rock type can be located in the proposed ACEC.</p>
<p>Natural hazards (including but not limited to areas of avalanche, dangerous flooding, landslides, unstable soils, seismic activity, or dangerous cliffs). A hazard caused by human action may meet the</p>	<p>No</p>	<p>There are no known natural hazards at this time.</p>

Area Considered: Saddle Mountain

relevance criteria if it is determined through the resource management planning process that it has become part of a natural process.		
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Importance Criteria

Importance: The value, resource, system, process, or hazard described above must have substantial significance and values to satisfy the “importance” criteria. This generally requires qualities of more than local significance and special worth, consequence, meaning, distinctiveness or cause for concern. A natural hazard can be important if it is a significant threat to human life or property.

Importance Value	Yes/No	Rationale for Determination
Has more than locally significant qualities, which give it special worth, consequence, meaning, distinctiveness, or cause for concern, especially compared to any similar resource.	Yes	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The proposed ACEC contains bighorn sheep and desert tortoise, noteworthy priority wildlife species, outstanding scenery and vistas, visually exposed geologic forces, important cultural resources and outdoor education opportunities. Paved and maintained dirt roads north and south of the area represent both a benefit for ensuring popular regional recreation visitation, and a threat from easy access, OHVs, and nearby urbanization. • The Saddle Mountain locale is the sole remaining and potentially useable corridor for wildlife movement north and south of Interstate 10. Consequently, the area represents a regionally important wildlife movement area between the Gila Bend Mountains to the south and the Harquahala/Belmont Mountains to the north. Moreover, future transportation mitigation could further improve opportunities for wildlife movement. Such wildlife movements are critical to maintain genetic diversity for wildlife populations over large tracts of public land north and south of Interstate 10. • Saddle Mountain’s striking upthrust is a highly visible and educational example of volcanic geologic resources. A one-hour drive from downtown Phoenix, Saddle Mountain is a familiar regional landmark to community members, travelers, and urban recreationists over hundreds of square miles. • The area offers outstanding wildlife, cultural

Area Considered: Saddle Mountain

		<p>and geologic study and education opportunities if these resource values are maintained in good to excellent condition. In particular, the mountain’s pyroclastic rocks account for both dramatic scenery and interpretive geologic values.</p>
<p>Has qualities or circumstances that make it fragile, sensitive, rare, irreplaceable, exemplary, unique, endangered, threatened, or vulnerable to adverse change.</p>	<p>Yes</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Contrasted by the surrounding area’s rapid development, the Saddle Mountain area has long been noted for its conspicuous natural condition, wildlife habitat, geology, scenery and recreational opportunities. These values are all especially vulnerable to adverse change from increasing public use and commercial activities. • Saddle Mountain’s easily assessable scenery and landscapes are a rarity in the locality. Most natural landscapes require difficult access and four wheel drive. Saddle Mountain has long been recognized for the quality and diversity of its recreation opportunities and its unusual assemblage of scenic, geologic and archaeological values. The area is noted by rock collectors for mineral specimens and is a popular camping and picnic area. Saddle Mountain is also noted for its remarkable springtime wildflower displays of poppies and other rare desert blooms. • Increased use of Saddle Mountain’s public lands by indiscriminate OHV travel, target shooters, unauthorized collection of natural and cultural resources, and saleable mineral material operations likely will disturb or destroy wildlife habitat, scenic resources, and cultural landscapes. These uses represent a major threat. Use of OHVs is expected to increase as the population in of the Phoenix metropolitan area and surrounding communities near the mountain grow and sprawl into this area. Over 200,000 new homes are anticipated and platted north, west and east of Saddle Mountain the area over the next 20 years.

Area Considered: Saddle Mountain

		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Over the past quarter century, the area's natural conditions, wildlife habitat, scenic resources, and cultural values, have been steadily diminished and sometimes destroyed by peripheral road building, OHV travel, utility line construction, mining, arson, plant theft, target shooting, wire burning, cultural resource theft and vandalism, wildcat dumps and trash dumping, abandoned and stolen cars, and other activities. Over 13,000 acres have been damaged in this fashion. Active management of the area can both protect the geologic, biological, and cultural resources and provide excellent recreational opportunities based on these resources.
<p>Has been recognized as warranting protection to satisfy national priority concerns or to carry out the mandates of FLPMA.</p>	<p>Yes</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> FLMPA mandates that the public lands be managed in a manner that will protect the quality of scientific, scenic, historical, ecological, environmental and archeological values; and where appropriate, BLM will preserve and protect certain public lands in their natural condition. Such lands will provide food and habitat for wildlife and provide for outdoor recreation. Additionally, FLMPA stated regulations and plans for the protection of public land areas of critical environmental concern would be promptly developed. The Saddle Mountain area warrants protection to meet the mandates of FLPMA. Saddle Mountain's dramatic visibility and proximity to the Phoenix metropolitan area, along with the newly developing or growing communities surrounding near the mountain, have presented it avid public attention. The land use plan's scoping process revealed strong public interest in long-term protection and conservation of the area from citizens across the region. Local, regional and national citizen groups have proposed recreation SRMAs, ACECs, wilderness, wilderness character allocations,

Area Considered: Saddle Mountain

		<p>regional county park status, state park designation, and federal national monument designation over the past 30 years.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> The area offers outstanding wildlife, cultural, photography, geologic and outdoor education opportunities for youth, regional schools and universities, but only if the subject resource values are maintained in good to excellent condition. In particular, the mountain's pyroclastic rocks account for dramatic scenery, volcanic science, and potential geological interpretive values. Nearly every type of volcanic and pyroclastic rock type can be located in the area.
<p>Has qualities that warrant highlighting to satisfy public or management concerns about safety and public welfare.</p>	<p>No</p>	<p>No qualities were identified.</p>
<p>Poses a significant threat to human life and safety or to property.</p>	<p>No</p>	<p>No threats have been identified.</p>