



U.S. Department of the Interior
Bureau of Land Management

**Rio Puerco Field Office Placitas Withdrawal
Environmental Assessment
Sandoval County, New Mexico
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DOI-BLM-NM-A010-2023-0033-EA**

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The BLM's multiple-use mission is to sustain the health and productivity of the public lands for the use and enjoyment of present and future generations. The Bureau accomplishes this by managing such activities as outdoor recreation, livestock grazing, mineral development, and energy production, and by conserving natural, historical, cultural, and other resources on public lands.

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CHAPTER 1. INTRODUCTION

1.1 BACKGROUND

Bureau of Land Management (BLM) is concerned that future surface disturbance activities associated with mineral exploration and development may compromise the scenic integrity, cultural importance, recreational values, and wildlife habitat connectivity on BLM-administered public land near Placitas, New Mexico. To ensure these values are protected, the BLM petitioned the Secretary of the Interior (Secretary) to withdraw 4,212.98 acres of public land near Placitas, New Mexico from mineral location and entry, leasing, and disposal, subject to valid existing rights, for a period of up to 50 years. The Secretary agreed with BLM's petition, and the BLM published a Federal Register Notice on September 20, 2023, announcing the Secretarial proposed withdrawal.

The proposed withdrawal area includes four non-contiguous tracts of land (parcels): Tracts A, B, C, and D. The parcels are found 30-miles northwest of the City of Albuquerque near the community of Placitas, New Mexico. To view maps of the proposed withdrawal area, please see Appendix A.

1.2 PURPOSE AND NEED

Section 302 of the Federal Land Policy and Management Act of 1976, as amended (FLPMA), directs the BLM to manage public land using the principles of multiple use and sustained yield following the land use plan developed by the Secretary under section 202 (43 U.S.C. 1732, Sec. 302). Section 204 of FLPMA authorizes the Secretary to make, modify, extend, or revoke withdrawals in accordance with the specific provisions of section 204.

The purpose of the proposed withdrawal is to protect, preserve, and promote the scenic integrity, cultural importance, recreational values, and wildlife habitat connectivity within the Placitas area. This protection is needed to avoid any adverse impacts to these resource values from location and entry under the U.S. mining laws as well as other kinds of mineral development, including the disposal of mineral materials.

1.3 DECISION TO BE MADE

The Secretary will decide whether to sign a public land order to withdraw 4,212.98 acres of BLM-administered public land from location and entry under the U.S. mining laws; leasing under the U.S. mineral leasing laws and disposal under the U.S. mineral materials disposal laws, subject to valid existing rights, for a period of up to 50 years.

1.4 CONFORMANCE WITH BLM LAND USE PLANS, OTHER STATUTES, REGULATIONS, AND PLANS

1.4.1 BLM Land Use Plan Conformance

Secretarial withdrawals are not required to conform to BLM land use plans; however, the proposed withdrawal aligns with the Rio Puerco Field Office (RPFO) approved Resource Management Plan (RMP) (BLM 1986), as amended and updated (BLM 1991a, 1992a), otherwise applicable to the area. The RMP recommends withdrawal of RPFO-managed public lands when there are conditions that warrant it, such that through withdrawal of these public lands, public safety is guaranteed, or integrity of special uses is assured (RMP pg. 98)

More generally, the RMP directs the BLM to manage the RPFO planning area to:

- Protect the quality of scenic values (RMP pg. 69)
- Protect and provide for proper use of cultural resources (RMP pg. 87)
- Ensure the continued availability of outdoor recreation opportunities (RMP pg. 60)
- Improve and protect aquatic and terrestrial wildlife habitat by coordinating the management of other resources and uses on public land (RMP pg. 54)

1.4.2 Relationship to Statutes, Regulations, Policies, and Other Plans

The BLM must follow all applicable federal, laws and regulations, and is guided by U.S. Department of the Interior policies, with respect to withdrawal proposals on behalf of the Secretary. A list of the main applicable statutes, regulations, directives, and other plans that apply to the withdrawal process is found below in Table 1.1.

Table 1.1. Relationship to Statutes, Regulations, Policies, and Other Plans

Relevant Statute, Regulation, or Plan	Relationship to the Proposed action
Federal Land Policy and Management Act	FLPMA established guidelines to provide for the management, protection, development, and enhancement of public lands (Public Law [PL] 94-579). Section 204 of FLPMA provides the authorization and limitations as well as delegation of authority and procedures for withdrawals of lands. The BLM is required to identify and analyze potential effects connected to the withdrawal of federal mineral estate (43 C.F.R. § 3101.1 ; BLM Handbook H-1601) Within the context of the National Environmental Policy Act of 1969, as amended (NEPA), the BLM considers FLPMA compliance when conducting NEPA analyses for mineral withdrawals, and the BLM issues a Finding of No Significant Impact (FONSI) when it is determined that the Proposed action would not violate any federal, state, tribal, or local law protecting the environment.
43 C.F.R. § 2300 et seq.	These regulations set forth procedures implementing the Secretary of the Interior's authority to withdraw Federal land as set forth in section 204 of FLPMA and, where appropriate, to make, modify or extend Federal land withdrawals. Procedures for making emergency withdrawals are also included.
Rio Puerco Resource Management Plan	The approved Rio Puerco Resource Management Plan (RMP) (BLM 1986), as amended and updated (BLM 1991a, 1992a) provides management direction for the proposed withdrawal area.
Endangered Species Act (ESA)	The ESA requires all federal departments and agencies to conserve threatened, endangered, and critical and sensitive species and the habitats on which they depend, as well as consult with the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service on all actions authorized, funded, or carried out by the agency to ensure that the action will not likely jeopardize the continued existence of any threatened and endangered species or adversely modify critical habitat. As discussed below, withdrawals such as the one proposed do not incorporate any surface disturbance; therefore, they do not have effects on listed species or critical habitat and no consultation is required under section 7 of the ESA.
National Historic Preservation Act (NHPA) as amended	Withdrawals are considered an undertaking pursuant to 54 U.S.C. § 300101 et seq., commonly known as the National Historic Preservation Act of 1966, as amended (NHPA), and 54 U.S.C. § 306108, commonly known as Section 106 of the NHPA (Section 106); however, as discussed below, withdrawals such as the one proposed are the type of activity that does not have the potential to cause effects on historic properties, assuming such historic properties were present. 36 C.F.R. § 800.3(a)(1). Therefore, the BLM has no further obligation under section 106.

1.5 PUBLIC INVOLVEMENT AND ISSUES

1.5.1 Internal Scoping

The BLM RPFO interdisciplinary team had many internal discussions to identify any potential issues with the area proposed for withdrawal. The team considered the withdrawal proposal within the context of the Rio Puerco RMP using the National Environmental Policy Act of 1969 (NEPA) framework. Internal meetings were held at the RPFO on October 2, 16, and 30, 2023. Bi-weekly meetings were held with additional BLM staff including New Mexico State Office personnel, and BLM Headquarters personnel to develop the withdrawal proposal and purpose and need. Additionally, individual resource-specific meetings with resource specialists were held to aid in refining the withdrawal issues and analysis.

1.5.2 External Scoping

The RPFO initiated public outreach, on behalf of the Secretary, via a notice of proposed withdrawal, which was published in the Federal Register (Volume 88 No. 181, Wednesday, September 20, 2023). The notice initiated a 90-day public comment period from September 20 to December 19, 2023. One in-person public meeting for the proposed withdrawal was held at the Placitas Community Library on November 14, 2023, in Sandoval County, New Mexico. The meeting included a short presentation summarizing the withdrawal proposal and an opportunity for attendees to comment on the proposal. All comments received at the meeting supported the proposed withdrawal.

A project summary page for the proposed withdrawal was posted on the BLM's National NEPA Register website (<https://eplanning.blm.gov>) on September 20, 2023. The withdrawal information included the Federal Register notice and maps.

The RPFO received 745 comment letters and emails during the 90-day scoping period. Over 90 percent of the letters and emails received were in support of the proposed withdrawal. Comments received are summarized below:

- The parcels are sacred to neighboring Indian pueblos.
- The parcels have cultural significance to the recipients of land grants.
- The parcels are crucial to native wildlife for their survival.
- The parcels should be preserved as a wild animal pathway.
- The parcels are locally known for the Placitas horses and recreational uses.
- Mining would cause unwanted dust, habitat destruction, and truck traffic in the area.
- Mining would degrade the natural landscape and cause environmental impacts.
- Mining in the surrounding area would reduce property values.
- The parcels are part of the acknowledged Sandoval County Wildlife Corridor.
- The proposed withdrawal would potentially increase the cost of sand and gravel in the Albuquerque region.

In addition, the following requests were presented:

- Consider the recreational planning efforts the BLM and Placitas communities have engaged in and protect recreational uses.
- Provide maps of the proposed withdrawal area.

- Revise the Rio Puerco Resource Management Plan.
- Consider horse management in the Placitas Area.

1.5.3 Public Comment and Response

This EA and unsigned (i.e., draft) FONSI posted on the BLM’s National NEPA Register website <https://eplanning.blm.gov/%20eplanning-ui/project/2026585/510> for a 30-day review and comment period from February 14th to March 15th, 2024. At the conclusion of this review period, the BLM will extract, review, analyze, and respond to substantive comments. The response to comments will be located in (Appendix B) of the EA.

The Council on Environmental Quality (CEQ) regulations at 40 C.F.R. § 1500.4(i) state that the scoping process should be used “not only to identify significant environmental issues deserving of study, but also to deemphasize insignificant issues narrowing the scope of the [NEPA] process accordingly.”

No issues regarding significant environmental impacts of the proposed withdrawal were raised by commenters. While commenters did anticipate that the proposed withdrawal would potentially increase the cost of sand and gravel in the Albuquerque region, the BLM does not expect this increase to be significant. Further, purely socioeconomic issues do not require preparation of an environmental impact statement (40 C.F.R. § 1502.16(b)); therefore, while this issue is discussed in Chapter 3, regardless of its significance, the BLM need not prepare an environmental impact statement to discuss such matters. Chapter 3 describes the affected environment and environmental effects associated with the proposed action and no-action alternative.

Table 1.2 (below) lists resources or concerns that were considered by the BLM but determined not to warrant additional analysis in Chapter 3 of this EA and provides rationale for that determination.

Table 1.2. Resources Considered but not Analyzed in this EA

Resource	Rationale for dismissal
Air Quality	The air quality within the proposed withdrawal parcels are considered to be in attainment of the National Ambient Air Quality Standards (NAAQS). The administrative act of withdrawing land would not result in any changes to criteria pollutant emissions. However, indirect emissions associated with the Proposed action (withdrawal) would result in potential criteria pollutant emission reductions as 4,212.98 acres would be withdrawn from: location and entry under the United States mining laws; leasing under the mineral leasing laws and disposal under the mineral materials disposal laws, subject to valid existing rights, for a period of 50 years. Existing uses of the public lands would continue in accordance with their terms and conditions. The no-action Alternative could result in potential indirect emission increases associated with mineral development and extraction.
Sole or Principal Drinking Water Aquifer	A review of the Environmental Protection Agency Sole Source Aquifer Map shows that the proposed withdrawal parcels are not situated over a sole source aquifer, therefore, no other analysis is warranted.
National Natural Landmarks	A review of the National Natural Landmark System map shows that the proposed withdrawal parcels are not situated within a National Natural Landmark therefore, no other analysis is warranted.
National Park Land	A review of the National Park System map shows that the proposed exchange parcels are not situated within a National Park therefore, no other analysis is warranted.
Wild and Scenic Rivers	A review of the National Wild and Scenic River System map shows that the proposed exchange parcels are not situated within a Wild and Scenic Rivers corridor therefore, no other analysis is warranted.
Refuge Land	A review of the National Wildlife Refuge system map shows that the proposed withdrawal parcels are not situated within a National Wildlife Refuge therefore, no other analysis is warranted.

Farmlands (prime or unique)	A review of the Natural Resources Conservation Service Soil Survey Geographic Database (SSURGO) shows that there are no prime farmland or farmland of unique importance associated with the proposed withdrawal parcels therefore, no other analysis is warranted.
Wilderness Areas	A review of the Rio Puerco RMP, updated October 1992, Map 18 WILDERNESS INTERIM MANAGEMENT AREAS shows that the proposed withdrawal parcels are not situated within a Wilderness or Wilderness Study Area therefore, no other analysis is warranted.
National Monuments	A review of the Rio Puerco RMP, updated October 1992, Map 21 SPECIAL MANAGEMENT AREAS shows that the proposed withdrawal parcels not within a National Monuments therefore, no additional analysis is warranted.
Special Management Areas (SMAs)	A review of the Rio Puerco RMP, updated October 1992, Map 21 SPECIAL MANAGEMENT AREAS shows the proposed withdrawal parcels not situated within an SMA therefore, no additional analysis is warranted.
Threatened and/or Endangered Species Critical Habitat	A review of the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service Critical Habitat for Threatened and Endangered Species map and Information for Planning and Consultation generated official species list (project code 2024-0004631), it has been determined that the proposed withdrawal parcels do not contain designated or proposed Critical Habitat therefore, no additional analysis is warranted. In addition, withdrawals such as the one proposed do not incorporate any surface disturbance; therefore, they do not have effects on listed species or critical habitat and no consultation is required under section 7 of the ESA.
Wastes, Hazardous or Solid	A review of the United States Environmental Protection Agency list of Superfund National Priorities List (NPL) identifies 15 recognized sites within New Mexico, none of which are in Tracts A-D.
Threatened and/or Endangered Species	A review of the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service Information for Planning Consultation Official species list generated for the project (project code 2024-0004631), lists seven wildlife species that may be present in the four proposed tracts and adjacent lands. There were no plant species on the list. Five species, New Mexico jumping mouse (<i>Zapus hudsonius luteus</i>), Rio Grande Cutthroat Trout (<i>Oncorhynchus clarkii virginalis</i>), Rio Grande Silvery Minnow (<i>Hybognathus amarus</i>), Yellow-billed cuckoo (<i>Coccyzus americanus</i>), and Southwestern Willow Flycatcher (<i>Empidonax traillii extimus</i>) are reliant on streams, wetlands, and riparian habitat that is not documented in any of the tracts. One species, Mexican spotted owl (<i>Strix occidentalis lucida</i>), relies on forested and rocky canyon communities that are not documented in any of the tracts. One candidate species, monarch butterfly (<i>Danaus plexippus</i>), is known to occur in vegetation communities like those present in the tracts, but there are no records of the species in this area. Further, monitoring plots established in Tract A in 2019 and 2021 did not document any milkweed species that could host eggs or caterpillars. In arid climates, monarch butterflies typically migrate through riparian corridors due to the increased density of vegetation including milkweed and nectary species to support the species (BLM 2022f). Monarch butterflies may fly through the tracts but are unlikely to rely on this area for forage or reproduction due to the lack of milkweed and riparian corridors. Available threatened and endangered plant and animal occurrence data and a comprehensive review of available listed species habitat data conclude that it is unlikely any federally listed species could occur in any of the proposed tracts for withdrawal. No additional analysis is warranted. In addition, withdrawals such as the one proposed do not incorporate any surface disturbance; therefore, they do not have effects on listed species or critical habitat and no consultation is required under section 7 of the ESA.
Public Health and Safety	The administrative act of withdrawing land is not expected to result in any public health and safety impacts therefore, no other analysis is warranted.
Lands/Access	Neither the proposed action nor no-action alternative would apply to realty actions permitted across the parcels.

CHAPTER 2. PROPOSED ACTION AND ALTERNATIVES

2.1 PROPOSED ACTION

Under the proposed action, the Secretary of the Interior would sign a public land order withdrawing 4,212.98 acres of public land (in four non-contiguous tracts or parcels) near Placitas, New Mexico from location and entry under the United States mining laws, from leasing under the mineral leasing laws, and from disposal of minerals under the Materials Act of 1947 for a period of up to 50 years, subject to valid existing rights. The proposed withdrawal would only affect public lands managed by BLM, including

both the surface and federal mineral estate. Legal descriptions of the parcels proposed for withdrawal are included in Appendix C.

2.2 NO-ACTION ALTERNATIVE

Under the no-action alternative, the Secretary would not sign a public land order withdrawing the parcels. The parcels would continue to be managed according to the Rio Puerco RMP, and the land would not be withdrawn from location and entry under the United States mining laws, from leasing under the mineral leasing laws, or from disposal of minerals under the Materials Act of 1947.

CHAPTER 3. AFFECTED ENVIRONMENT AND ENVIRONMENTAL EFFECTS

3.1 INTRODUCTION

The following analysis was developed using input from internal and external scoping described in Section 1.5.1 and 1.5.2. The analysis is provided to inform a reasoned choice between alternatives, to determine significance, or consider how well the proposal responds to the purpose and need.

Wetland Riparian Zones

A review of the RPFO riparian geospatial dataset shows that one named stream, Las Huertas Creek, exists in Tract A. No other mapped riparian corridors occur in tracts B, C, or D. Las Huertas Creek was included in the Riparian and Aquatic Habitat Management EIS (BLM 2000), after public comments on the Draft Environmental Impact Statement suggesting its inclusion in the Rio Puerco Field Office Riparian and Aquatic Habitat Management Plan (Riparian HMP). In the Riparian HMP, no management actions were assigned as a condition assessment had not yet been completed by resource specialists at Las Huertas Creek. In a subsequent condition assessment conducted in 2000, the stream was rated as non-functional as there was little riparian vegetation. A subsequent assessment conducted in 2016 confirmed that the system is best characterized by an arid arroyo system that does not support an abundance of riparian habitat.

A review of the National Wetlands Inventory: Surface Waters and Wetlands map (NWI) and National Hydrographic Dataset (NHD) showed that there are several blue-line drainages in all tracts proposed for withdrawal. The status of these features as potentially jurisdictional waters has not yet been verified in the field. It is likely that surface flows exist in all tracts at some point of the year, but that they are not consistent enough to support riparian vegetation or in-stream wetlands.

Under the proposed action the parcels would be withdrawn from mineral location and entry under the Mining Law, leasing under the mineral leasing laws, and disposal under the Materials Act; therefore, no impacts to riparian or wetlands would occur from new mineral exploration or development.

Even under the no-action alternative, if a mineral exploration or development is proposed within or near Las Huertas Creek (or these blue-line drainages) that requires BLM decision-making, the drainages would be further analyzed to determine if they are jurisdictional waters of the US. The BLM would consult with the United States Army Corps of Engineers before ground disturbance begins. Best Management Practices would be deployed including, but not limited to, full avoidance, no dredge or fill, and appropriate stormwater runoff/erosion abatement techniques. These practices would avoid impacts to water quality and associated riparian or wetland areas. Impacts would be avoided, minimized, and/or

mitigated. It is typically a best practice to “micro-site” development to avoid permanent impacts to potentially jurisdictional waters, and it is anticipated that this would be the case under either alternative, if a proposal for mineral extraction occurred that required BLM decision-making. However, under the U.S. mining laws and the BLM’s surface management regulations at 43 C.F.R. Part 3809, not all mineral exploration activities on non-withdrawn land require BLM decision-making; therefore, the BLM would not be able to prevent all new activities that may result in impacts to public land resources should the land not be withdrawn.

Considering that the proposed withdrawal does not incorporate any surface disturbing activity, there is no potential for direct, indirect or cumulative impacts to occur as a result of the proposed action; therefore, no further analysis is warranted.

Water Quality (Surface/Ground)

Although surface and groundwater are present in the analysis area, as the proposed withdrawal does not incorporate any surface disturbance activities, the BLM does not anticipate that the proposed withdrawal would result in any direct, indirect, or cumulative impacts on surface or groundwater resources..

Even under the no-action alternative, any mineral exploration or development proposal requiring BLM decision-making would need to include measures to prevent excess sediment from reaching the main stem of Las Huertas Creek or its tributaries and prevent infiltration of harmful substances.

Wildlife Habitat Connectivity

Instructional Memo IM 2023-005 (Habitat Connectivity on Public Lands) directs the BLM to assess habitat connectivity and “...ensure habitat connectivity, permeability, and resilience is restored, maintained, improved, and/or conserved on public lands.” The IM directs the BLM to work with State and Tribal wildlife managers and other stakeholders to assess data regarding habitat connectivity and with partners to develop and implement ecosystem-based conservation strategies for areas of habitat connectivity, especially in areas of mixed land ownership (BLM 2022). While the BLM has not yet delineated priority wildlife corridors or created statewide conservation strategies in response to IM 2023-005, the RPFO recognizes the intention of IM 2023-005 to support data-driven State and Tribal efforts in recovering and protecting wildlife corridors.

The New Mexico Wildlife Corridors Act of 2019 mandated the creation of a Wildlife Corridors Action Plan to, in part, identify and maintain important areas of wildlife movement and prioritize future projects to construct wildlife crossing structures on major roads. The New Mexico Wildlife Corridors Action Plan identifies important areas of wildlife movement to prioritize future wildlife connectivity projects across major roads in New Mexico (Cramer et al. 2022).

Tracts A, B, C, and D proposed for withdrawal lie within the Sandia-Jemez Mountains conceptual wildlife corridor. The Sandia-Jemez Mountains wildlife corridor was identified by the Wildlife Corridors Action Plan as a priority linkage for wildlife passage across portions of Interstate-25 (I-25) near Albuquerque, NM. The Sandia-Jemez conceptual wildlife corridor links important habitat for large animals including black bear, mountain lion, mule deer, pronghorn antelope, and elk.

The Sandia-Jemez conceptual corridor was identified largely by analyzing wildlife-vehicle conflict and wildlife carcass data provided by New Mexico Department of Game and Fish (NMDGF), New Mexico Department of Transportation (NMDOT) and the Pueblo of Santa Ana Department of Natural Resources, as well as animal movement data obtained through studies of collared animals conducted by the Pueblo of Santa Ana Department of Natural Resources and research conducted by Dr. Travis Perry at Furman

University. This has been developed in coordination with the Kirtland Airforce Base (Cramer et al. 2022). Elk, mule deer, black bear, and mountain lions have all been involved in wildlife-vehicle conflicts on nearby I-25 as reported by the Wildlife Corridors Action Plan. Additionally, the Pueblo of Santa Ana wildlife movement data demonstrate that pronghorn, elk, mule deer, black bear, and cougar movement was limited northeast of I-25; animals did not cross to the interstate to access land on the southeast side of I-25, even though vegetation communities on both sides of the highway meet the habitat requirements of these species. It is believed that current traffic volumes on I-25 create a barrier to wildlife population movement, but this area would otherwise provide a linkage between the Sandia and Jemez Mountains.

The Wildlife Corridor Action Plan calls for precisely focused efforts to protect the wildlife movement corridors within this linkage amid rapidly expanding urban development in the Albuquerque metropolitan area and associated transportation infrastructure. If the Sandia-Jemez Mountains wildlife corridor is restored, wildlife including, but not limited to, the species mentioned above may benefit from range expansions, increased genetic diversity, and increased habitat connectivity.

Under the proposed action, the Secretary would withdraw 4,212.98 acres of public land from mineral location and entry, as well as mineral leasing and mineral materials disposal within the conceptual Sandia-Jemez wildlife corridor. If State, Federal, or Tribal wildlife managers fund a wildlife passage across I-25 in the future, it is believed that wildlife could travel across Tracts A, B, C, and D between the Sandia and Jemez Mountain Ranges, expanding population range and genetic diversity. The protection of these parcels from the possibility of new mineral exploration and development activities for 50 years would provide time for state, federal, or tribal entities to fund, design, and construct a wildlife crossing project to solidify the Sandia-Jemez Corridor. The protection of tracts A, B, C, and D would stabilize the availability of natural landscapes into the future, which could contribute to safe and reliable pathways through the corridor for dispersing wildlife.

Tract A is nearest to I-25 and any future wildlife crossing structures constructed to allow for safe wildlife passage, and is the largest parcel proposed for withdrawal from mineral location and entry, as well as leasing and other disposal. For these reasons, it is of particular importance to the Jemez-Sandia wildlife corridor. Additionally, Tract A contains Las Huertas Creek, an ephemeral arroyo. Riparian corridors are known to attract dispersing and foraging wildlife (O'Connell 1993). Recent studies found that species richness is higher at highway wildlife crossing structures near streams than at wildlife crossing structures that are not near riparian corridors. Increased species richness within wildlife corridors near streams implies that more species are choosing to use riparian systems as migratory corridors when they are available on the landscape, thus demonstrating the importance of riparian features within wildlife corridors (Jensen et al. 2022). In the semiarid southwest surface water is less prominent on the landscape and riparian areas such as the Las Huertas Creek do not contain dense riparian vegetation due to the ephemeral nature of the arroyo. Studies in the southwest have recently demonstrated that mammals use intermittent desert washes and arroyos in addition to densely vegetated riparian systems as movement corridors (Ragan et al. 2022). It is anticipated that Tract A will be an important contribution to the Jemez-Sandia wildlife corridor in the future because Las Huertas creek is likely a valuable feature for dispersing mammals. Although it is an arid feature, Las Huertas creek provides an unobstructed path and occasional water, forage, or cover to wildlife traversing the Sandia-Jemez wildlife corridor in the future.

Tract D is adjacent to tribal lands held by the Pueblo of San Felipe to the north, and Parcels comprising of Ball Ranch Area of Critical Environmental Concern (ACEC) to the Northeast. These lands are currently undeveloped and continue to be protected for sensitive resources present. The preservation of Tract B directly contributes to ongoing preservation of large, undisturbed sections of public land in the conceptual Sandia-Jemez wildlife corridor.

Overall, withdrawing all tracts from mineral location and entry as well as mineral leasing and other disposal will enhance stability of a natural landscape, protect natural pathways for wildlife dispersing through arroyos, and support the future rehabilitation of a priority wildlife corridor in New Mexico.

The no-action alternative would continue to allow potential future mineral exploration and development on tracts A, B, C, and D, without the requirement that this development be based on valid existing rights. If it is proposed, future mineral exploration and development could create additional barriers to wildlife passage through reduction of vegetative cover, visual obstruction by infrastructure, increased noise through operations, and light pollution during crepuscular hours when large mammals are most active. Although not a certainty, it is possible that mineral development in tracts A, B, C, and D could reduce overall stability of the natural landscape.

Considering that the impacts from withdrawing four tracts from location and entry under the U.S. mining laws as well as from mineral leasing and mineral materials disposal would increase stability in a conceptual wildlife corridor, it is anticipated that this project would have a net cumulative benefit to wildlife movement and range.

BLM Sensitive Species

After a review of available wildlife data, including New Mexico Heritage occurrence data (NHNM 2023), no BLM-Sensitive species are known to occur in any of the tracts proposed for withdrawal. Two BLM-Watch plants are documented within or adjacent to tracts A, C, and D. These plants do not have a BLM-Sensitive status, but populations are being monitored to determine if a status change to BLM-Sensitive is justified in the future.

Two BLM-Sensitive plants (*Abronia bigelovii* and *Mentzelia todiltoensis*) are known to exist at Ball Ranch ACEC, which lies just northeast of Tract D, but the species are not currently known to occur on the tracts proposed for withdrawal. Both species are associated with gypseous soils from the Todilto Formation which dates to the Jurassic Period (New Mexico Rare Plant Technical Council 2023).

The tracts proposed for withdrawal are mapped as Cenozoic Alluvium, Upper Santa Fe Group which dates to the Quaternary-Tertiary system (Rodriquez et al. 2013). It is not anticipated that the tracts have appropriate soils to support either BLM-Sensitive plant.

Because there are no BLM-Sensitive species documented in the proposed tracts, no further analysis is warranted. Surveys for BLM-Sensitive species would occur in the event of future development proposals in all proposed tracts, on a project-by-project basis, under either alternative. Considering that the proposed withdrawal does not incorporate any surface disturbing activities, the BLM does not anticipate any adverse impacts, whether direct, indirect, or cumulative to BLM sensitive species.

Migratory Birds

All tracts contain vegetation communities including pinyon-juniper woodlands and desert scrub that could and likely support migratory nesting birds. The Migratory Bird Treaty Act (MBTA) prohibits unauthorized take, including incidental take, of migratory birds. Take of nesting birds, is defined as “pursue, hunt, shoot, wound, kill, trap, capture, or collect” (DOI 2017).

Under the no-action alternative, the proposed tracts would not be withdrawn from location and entry under the U.S. mining laws and would remain open to new mineral leasing and new mineral materials disposal. Mining activities would likely impact nesting birds. All nesting migratory birds would be protected by provisions under the MBTA and take would be prohibited to maintain compliance with

federal regulation. Under either alternative, in the event of future development (allowable on withdrawn land only based on valid existing rights), temporary impacts via loss of habitat or disturbance from noise may occur, but they would be avoided, minimized, or mitigated to the greatest extent and impacts would be fully analyzed.

Under the proposed action, as the land would be withdrawn from location and entry under the U.S. mining laws and from mineral leasing and new mineral materials disposal, there would be no impact to migratory nesting birds from any new mineral development-related activities and there is no potential for adverse direct, indirect, or cumulative impacts.

Greenhouse Gas and Climate Change

The withdrawal of land as proposed does not incorporate surface disturbing activities; therefore, it would not result in any changes to greenhouse gas emissions, nor any adverse direct, indirect, or cumulative impacts. Under the no-action alternative, existing uses of the public lands would continue in accordance with their terms and conditions and mineral location or entry would not be prevented. Under either alternative, any new development proposals requiring BLM decision-making would be subject to greenhouse gas and climate change analysis. Considering that the proposed withdrawal would limit certain exploration for and extraction of minerals, discharges of emissions would not occur from mineral-related activities not associated with valid existing rights.

Noxious and Invasive Weeds

The withdrawal of land as proposed does not incorporate surface disturbing activities; therefore, it would not have the potential to increase the number of weed species that exist nor the potential for their dispersion or increase in infestation size because no equipment associated with mineral extraction would be permitted besides those associated with valid existing rights or existing leases or other authorizations. That is, the proposed withdrawal would have no adverse impacts, direct, indirect, or cumulative, to the introduction or spread of noxious and invasive weeds. By contrast, under the no-action alternative, mineral location or entry could occur that would not require BLM decision-making; therefore, the BLM would not be able to prevent the possible occurrence of certain impacts related to such activities. Under either alternative any new leasing or mineral exploration or mining-related activities requiring BLM decision-making would be subject to analysis of any impacts related to the possibility of noxious and invasive weeds, and likely incorporate operator committed design features, including post-reclamation requirements that would ensure any noxious weed infestations (if present) are addressed and native vegetation has adequately recovered according to the approved reclamation plan.

BLM Recreation Resources

The BLM administered lands located in Placitas, NM are ideal for recreational opportunities due to their proximity to the Village of Placitas, Metropolitan City of Albuquerque, Town of Bernalillo, and the City of Rio Rancho. Land managed by the City of Albuquerque Open Space Division borders Parcel A and is home to various recreational trails and facilities that interconnect with user created trails on BLM lands. Parcels A, B, and C support numerous recreational activities such as dispersed camping, hiking, sightseeing, dog walking, horseback riding, hunting, recreational shooting, biking, and motorized vehicle use. Numerous unimproved user-created trails and parking areas can be found on Parcels A, B, and C. Parcel D is currently inaccessible to the public without private landowner and tribal permissions, and the amount and type of recreational uses are unknown. Special Recreation Permits are issued and available

for commercial, competitive, organized groups and other public land users within the proposed withdrawal area.

Under both the proposed withdrawal and the no-action alternative the BLM anticipates the continued use of these lands for the recreational activities listed above, consistent with the RMP. Should a formal request for alternative uses and users be received in the future, the BLM would analyze the proposal and weigh potential impacts to these recreational activities.

The proposed withdrawal, if approved, would support the Department of the Interior's (DOI) Strategic Plan to Celebrate and Enhance America's Great Outdoors. The DOI's efforts included in this mission area foster the intrinsic link between healthy economies and healthy landscapes with goals and strategies to increase tourism and outdoor recreation in balance with preservation and conservation. Collaborative and community-driven efforts and outcome-focused investments support the preservation and enhancement of rural landscapes, important ecosystems, cultural resources, and wildlife habitat. The goals and strategies incorporate the best available science, a landscape-level understanding of resource management, and stakeholder input to identify and share conservation priorities. The proposed withdrawal would protect the landscape and allow managers to advance accessible recreational opportunities such as hiking, bicycling, hunting, off-highway vehicle use, horseback riding, frisbee golf, recreational shooting, camping, and sightseeing on Tracts A, B, and C, and possibly Tract D. By comparison, because surface-disturbing activities would not be limited from occurring in the parcels proposed for withdrawal under the no-action alternative, that alternative would be more likely to result in adverse impacts to recreational opportunities. The soundscape of the withdrawal areas is composed of a mix of natural and human-generated sounds. Mineral development can alter the soundscape, overwhelming the natural sounds with industry related human-generated sounds which can negatively impact recreation experiences, decreasing the recreational resource value of the parcels. Mining could limit the location of available recreation activities as the infrastructure and safety concerns surround development would necessitate relocation of dispersed recreational activities such as shooting, hunting, and sightseeing. In contrast the proposed withdrawal would allow for dispersed recreation to continue unimpeded by potential future mineral development.

The proposed withdrawal would help the RPFO meet the DOI's Strategic Plan by Engaging the Next Generation and by Strengthening Tribal Nations. To address the growing disconnect between young people and the outdoors, the goals and strategies include promotion of public-private partnerships and collaborative efforts across all levels of government to connect young people with the land and inspire them to play, learn, serve, and work outdoors. The DOI efforts encompassed by the goals and strategies include the 21st Century Conservation Service Corps to leverage public investment and private philanthropy to build job skills, improve national parks and public lands, create opportunities for veterans, and create connections to the land for the next generation. These goals and strategies build upon progress made over the past 4 years to establish strong and meaningful relationships with tribes, strengthen government-to-government relationships, and deliver services to tribes by creating educational opportunities.

The proposed withdrawal has support from local organizations such as the Las Placitas Association (LPA) who aim to protect public lands, restore riparian watersheds, and promote recreational, educational, and rural activities; Pathways, who support wildlife awareness through monitoring, connectivity, and education; International Mountain Biking Association whose goal is to create, enhance and protect great places to ride mountain bikes; the City of Albuquerque Open Space Division who conserve natural and archaeological resources, provide opportunities for outdoor education, provide a place for low impact recreation, and rely on connectivity trails located in Tract A. With support of local communities and by building partnerships, recreation program goals are furthered and help increase support for public land stewardship.

OHV use is minimal in the proposed withdrawal area, and under the proposed withdrawal use of Off-Highway Vehicles (OHV) would continue consistent with the RMP. Under the proposed withdrawal opportunities for recreational shooting would continue, consistent with applicable law. Recreational shooting occurs north of power lines on Tract A and does not negatively impact areas closed to shooting located to the south and east.

The withdrawal as proposed would support recreational uses of the public lands in the area managed by the RPFO; there is no potential for adverse impacts, including direct, indirect or cumulative impacts from implementation of the proposed action.

Scenic Resources

The Rio Puerco RMP states that Visual Resources will be managed to protect the quality of the scenic values of the Rio Puerco Resource Area Public Lands. Unique and/or scenic attractions adjoining heavily travelled highways are managed on a priority basis.

Tracts A through D have been assigned a partial Visual Resource Inventory (VRI) Class IV status and partial VRI Class III. Class IV contains landscapes with a Class B scenery quality and high visual sensitivity in the seldom seen visual zone, or with Class B scenery quality and medium or low visual sensitivity in the background or seldom seen zones, or with Class C scenery quality (except with high sensitivity in the foreground/ middleground zone). Changes may subordinate the original composition and character but must reflect what could be a natural occurrence within the characteristic landscape.

Class III status contains landscapes with Class B scenery quality and high visual sensitivity in the background zone, or with Class B scenery quality and medium visual sensitivity in the foreground/middleground zone or will class C scenery and high visual sensitivity in the foreground/middleground zone. Changes in the basic elements (form, line, color, texture) caused by a management activity may be evident in the characteristic landscape; however, the changes should remain subordinate to the visual strength to the existing character.

Tract B has been assigned a partial Visual Resource Inventory Class II status which contains landscapes with Class A scenery, or Class B scenery quality in the foreground/middleground zone with a high visual sensitivity. Changes in any of the basic elements (form, line, color, texture) caused by a management activity should not be evident in the characteristic landscape.

The proposed withdrawal does not incorporate any surface disturbance activities and would not adversely impact Tracts A, B, C and D and would maintain the existing scenic resources; therefore, there would be no adverse impacts, whether direct, indirect or cumulative from the proposed action. By comparison, because surface-disturbing activities would not be limited from occurring in the parcels proposed for withdrawal under the no-action alternative, that alternative would be more likely to result in adverse impacts to scenic resources. Mining can cause major changes in landforms, creating sharp contrasts in the line, form, color, and textures visible in the landscape. The potential for the creation of roads, especially the downhill side cast along roads, create color and line contrasts which could be visible for miles for any mineral development negatively impacting the viewshed.

Under either the proposed withdrawal or the no-action alternative, for actions requiring BLM decision-making, the BLM would analyze potential future proposals and weigh potential impacts to Scenic Resources as Visual Resource Inventory Classes II, III, and IV as are all partially found in Tracts A, B, C and D.

Cultural Resources

The proposed withdrawal does not incorporate any surface disturbing activities; therefore, it has no potential to adversely affect cultural resources, either directly, indirectly, or cumulatively. If anything, the proposed withdrawal would limit surface-disturbing activities in the parcels proposed for withdrawal, minimizing the chance of disturbance to cultural resources, including historic properties. A review of the New Mexico Cultural Resources Information System indicates that there are 163 known cultural resources within the proposed withdrawal parcels; of those, 8 are known to be eligible for inclusion, but not listed, on the National Register of Historic Places.

A review of the National Register of Historic Places map indicates that the proposed withdrawal parcels do not contain cultural resources listed on the National Register of Historic Places (i.e., historic properties).

Cultural Significance

The lands within and surrounding the tracts proposed for withdrawal as the Placitas Withdrawal are culturally significant to many groups. Multiple Indian pueblos consider these lands sacred and of ancestral importance, including the Pueblo of San Felipe and the Pueblo of Santa Ana; the history of the pueblos and their origin stories are tied to these lands. The Pueblo of San Felipe considers the area an important part of their ancestral lands and is concerned for cultural sites in Tract A (commonly known as the Buffalo Tract).

For the Pueblo of Santa Ana, this area of the Placitas Withdrawal forms an important link between their modern villages and their historic village of Paak'u. The Pueblo of Santa Ana has expressed strong views on the cultural importance of Tract A, specifically Las Huertas Creek, as a migration route from the Rio Grande Valley to the Sandia Mountains and out to the Galisteo Basin. According to a letter of support from the Pueblo of Santa Ana, "The Placitas Withdrawal landscape is adjacent to Pueblo lands and culturally important to the people of Santa Ana for collecting items for traditional use, making offerings to [their] ancestors, as well as an established travel route to sacred sites."

Descendant communities of the San Antonio de las Huertas Land Grant and the El Tejon Land Grant also ascribe significance to these lands. The Merced de Comunidad de San Antonio de Las Huertas Land Grant has been stewards of the land in Placitas for over 250 years, and as a community they continue to strive to protect the resources their forebears fought to preserve for future generations.

The proposed withdrawal does not incorporate any surface disturbing activities; therefore, it would not adversely affect the cultural significance of these lands to interested communities either directly, indirectly, or cumulatively. Should the Secretary of the Interior approve the withdrawal as proposed for up to 50 years, the BLM anticipates there would be a marked decreasing the potential for adverse effects to the setting and feeling of the area, contributing to the preservation of the cultural significance of these lands to interested communities. Should the Secretary elect the no-action alternative and not withdraw the lands as proposed, these benefits would not be realized.

Paleontological Resources

The proposed withdrawal does not incorporate any surface disturbing activities; therefore, it has no potential to adversely affect paleontological resources, directly, indirectly, or cumulatively. If anything, the proposed withdrawal would limit certain surface-disturbing activities in the parcels proposed for withdrawal, minimizing the chance of disturbance to *in situ* paleontological resources. A review of BLM Potential Fossil Yield Classification GIS layers indicates that the proposed withdrawal parcels fall into

the following classes of potential for paleontological resources: Class 2 (Very Low) 31.4 percent; Class 3 (Moderate or Unknown) 21.2 percent; and Class 4 (High) 47.5 percent.

Mineral Resources (excluding common varieties)

There are no active leases, claims or mining activities on the tracts proposed for withdrawal. There has been little to no historical recorded production of minerals subject to the mining laws or available under the leasing laws in the tracts.

Most of the land in the tracts is located within the historic Placitas Mining District, and the mineral potential for metallic minerals (gold, copper, silver, and rare earth metals) and some nonmetallic/ industrial minerals (barite, fluorspar, magnesium, silica, gypsum, limestone) is judged to be moderate based on geologic conditions as well as previous exploration and information recorded for the Placitas mining district. Metallic minerals are used in all types of manufacturing, such as buildings, electrical/electronics, battery production, transportation, and to a lesser degree, pharmaceuticals. Industrial minerals are commonly used in construction, and the manufacturing of glass, ceramics, electronics, paints.

The tracts proposed for withdrawal are not considered to be prospectively valuable for the development of uranium or thorium deposits. Tracts A, B, and C are considered to have no potential based on the geologic conditions and absence of the resource and Tract D is considered to have low potential for uranium based on its proximity to the Hagen Basin area, which has moderate potential based on the presence of the Diamond Tail deposit. There has been no exploration or production recorded in the proposed tracts.

There is low potential for oil and gas resources within the subject tracts. There has been some exploratory drilling east of the tracts; however, there has been no recorded exploration, no mineral leases, and no oil or gas occurrences noted within the tracts proposed for withdrawal.

There are no known deposits of coal on the subject parcels, although the Placitas coal field does lie to the east of the parcels. The Placitas field is a series of small coal outcrops and is near the Hagan coal field, which saw some coal production in the early 1900s. There was no recorded production at the Placitas field, and due to the small size and steeply dipping coal seams, the resource potential would be moderate to low within the coal field. None of the subject tracts are within the coal field, with Tract D being the closest to this area. Accordingly, Tract D would be considered to have low potential, but Tracts A, B, and C have essentially no potential for this resource.

The BLM and United States Geological Service (USGS) have not mapped the subject tracts as prospectively valuable for non-energy leasable minerals such as sodium, potassium, sulfur, or phosphate. No known occurrences of these commodities have been reported on the subject tracts.

There is low potential for geothermal resources to occur, despite the high potential in the Albuquerque area and there has been no exploration to date in the area.

It is unknown what future mineral development could occur over the next 50 years within the withdrawal area. There are no permitted mines within the withdrawal area and no mineral development applications have been received for the withdrawal area over the past 10-years. The existing trends related to mineral exploration and development would be anticipated to continue under the current conditions under the no-action alternative, should the Secretary not withdraw the land as proposed. New mineral development applications would be reviewed by the RPFO and undergo site-specific NEPA analysis to ensure that the proposal does not cause any undo or unnecessary degradation to the environment. Under the no-action alternative, mining exploration or development proposals would not need to be based on valid existing

rights, and leasable minerals, both solid and fluid minerals would remain available for exploration and extraction under applicable authorities.

Under the proposed withdrawal, if approved, no new mining claims could be located and no new exploration for minerals could occur under the Mining Law and 43 CFR 3800 regulations. No new mineral leases would be issued for either solid or fluid minerals. Since future exploration would be prohibited for up to the next 50 years, no new undiscovered or undeveloped mineral resources would be found, mined, or extracted. However, since there has been little historic exploration within the area of the withdrawal, it is anticipated that the direct, indirect or cumulative impacts of withdrawing the land from location and entry under the U.S. mining laws and from mineral leasing would be minimal.

Common Variety Mineral Materials

In general, common variety minerals include materials such as sands, silts, clays, gravels, building stone, pumice and cinders. Although these minerals are considered common, significant deposits of minable materials can be hard to find depending on the type of mineral and the geology of the area. The surface geology of the area proposed for withdrawal primarily consists of sands, silts, and gravels, and significant sources of gravel occur within the tracts proposed for withdrawal. Although all the tracts have some quantities of sand and gravel, Tract A has a significant gravel resource, especially in the western half of the parcel. Currently, there is a gravel operation within Tract A that is closed and pending final reclamation approval. There are also gravel operations on lands to the north and southwest of Tract A, and there have been previous exploration permits issued for possible expansion of the operation to the north into the tract.

There are known deposits of aggregate materials at Tract A that could be used for roads and other construction, and the potential for these materials is moderate in Tracts D and C, based on the presence and abundance of stream alluvium and fluvial deposits associated with the Santa Fe Group. In general, Tract B has low potential for significant aggregate resources based on its geology. According to data published by the New Mexico State Highway Department (NMSHD 1964) and the Soil Conservation Service (Hacker 1977), deposits of the Santa Fe Group, which are within the area of the tracts proposed for withdrawal are classed as A-1 and A-2 soils with a thin A-4 overburden. Type A-1 soils are gravelly, have high bearing strength and produce exceptional foundation and subgrade materials, making this high-quality material for roads and other uses. The proximity of Tract A to highway access has allowed for relatively easy access to the abundant gravel deposits in the western part of the tract.

Other common variety minerals may exist within the tracts proposed for withdrawal but have not been permitted for production.

Under the no-action alternative, current land and resource uses would continue, and the federal mineral acreage would remain open to explore for and extract all types of minerals. This would include disposal of minerals covered under the Materials Act of 1947, such as sand and gravel. Mineral resources would remain available for future exploration and possible mining under the applicable regulations. Since the BLM has discretion not to permit common variety minerals included under the 43 CFR 3600 regulations, any proposals would be evaluated, the appropriate level of NEPA would be completed and a decision to permit or not to permit the action would be made.

Under the proposed withdrawal, approximately 4,213.98 acres of land would be unavailable for mineral exploration or extraction under the mineral leasing laws, subject to valid existing rights, for up to 50 years. No new exploration or mining of mineral materials could occur under 43 CFR 3600 regulations. Since the future availability and need for these minerals over the next 50 years cannot be reliably forecasted, it is unclear how a Secretarial withdrawal as proposed could affect the future growth of the

Albuquerque area and the availability of needed mineral materials (sand/gravel). Mines currently in operation located primarily on private and tribal estate, as found on (Figure A.6.) are supporting demand of sand/gravel needs for the metro area.

The proposed withdrawal does not incorporate any surface disturbing activity; therefore, it would not result in any impacts either direct, indirect, or cumulative. In addition, since no new mining of mineral materials could occur should the Secretary withdraw the land as proposed, the potential impacts of a mine to visual, cultural, and other resources would not occur; therefore, there would be no potential for direct, indirect or cumulative impacts to these resources.

Environmental Justice

The area of analysis for environmental justice is the six communities in Sandoval County which are within a radius of 5 miles from Placitas Withdrawal area, namely, (1) San Felipe Pueblo census designated place (CDP), (2) Algodones CDP, (3) Santa Ana Pueblo CDP, (4) Bernalillo Town, (5) Placitas CDP (Sandoval County), and (6) La Madera CDP (Sandoval County), respectively (Appendix D – Map 1A, Map 1B and Map 1C).

For 2021, all 6 communities should be considered as an environmental justice (EJ) community of concern (Appendix D – Table 2).

- (1) San Felipe Pueblo CDP based on EJ community criteria 1, 2, 3, 4 and 5
- (2) Algodones CDP, (3) Santa Ana Pueblo CDP, and (4) Bernalillo Town based on EJ community criteria 1, 2, 4 and 5
- (5) Placitas CDP based on EJ community criterion 5
- (6) La Madera CDP based on EJ community criterion 4

EJ community criteria refer to the following.

- EJ community criterion 1: minority population higher than 50%
- EJ community criterion 2: minority population higher than 110% of reference area
- EJ community criterion 3: low-income population higher than 50%
- EJ community criterion 4: low-income population higher than 100% of reference area
- EJ community criterion 5: tribal communities

The following key socioeconomic characteristics are reflected in the analysis area in the year 2016 and the year 2021 (Appendix D – Table 3, Table 4, Table 5, and Figure 2).

- Size of community, (6) La Madera CDP had population less than 500 people in 2021. (3) Santa Ana Pueblo CDP had a population increase by more than 50% from 2016 to 2021.
- Income change, both (1) San Felipe Pueblo CDP and (2) Algodones CDP had decreased incomes by more than 20% from 2016 to 2021.
- Poverty level (that is, low-income population), (1) San Felipe Pueblo CDP had remarkably higher levels in 2021 (more than 200% of the county level).
- Unemployment level, both (1) San Felipe Pueblo CDP and (6) La Madera CDP had remarkably higher levels in 2021 (more than 200% of the county level and state level).
- Senior population (that is, over age 64), (5) Placitas CDP had a remarkably higher level in 2021 (more than 200% of the county level and the state level).
- Education limitation (that is, less than high school), both (1) San Felipe Pueblo CDP and (4) Bernalillo Town had a remarkably higher level in 2021 (more than 200% of the county level).

- Language limitation (that is, limited English speaking), (1) San Felipe Pueblo CDP, (2) Algodones CDP, (3) Santa Ana Pueblo CDP, and (4) Bernalillo Town had a remarkably higher level in 2021 (more than 200% of the county level and state level).
- Employed labor forces by sectors in 2021, the six communities overall had major employment in three sectors: (A) Educational services, health care and social assistance, (B) Arts, entertainment, recreation, accommodation and food services, and (C) Professional, scientific, technical and managerial services; they had least employment in these three sectors: (D) Information; (E) Natural resources, agriculture and mining; and (F) Manufacturing.

The following conclusion can be drawn, based on the analyses conducted in this EA for the identified resource issues of the Placitas Withdrawal, the geographical locations of the communities, the potential uses of the resources by the communities, and the combinations of socioeconomic characteristics of the communities.

- The proposed withdrawal would not result in disproportionately high and adverse human, environmental and economic impacts on the EJ communities, whether direct, indirect, or cumulative.

The communities in (1) San Felipe Pueblo CDP and (6) La Madera CDP could be identified as having priority concerns that would benefit from programs with the potential to reduce poverty level and improve employment level. The communities in (2) Algodones CDP, (3) Santa Ana Pueblo CDP, and (4) Bernalillo Town could be identified as having priority concerns that would benefit from programs with the potential to improve education attainment level and promote language diversity. The communities in (5) Placitas CDP could be identified as having priority concerns that would benefit from programs with the potential to support senior population.

Economy and Values of Ecosystem Services

The area of analysis for socioeconomic is the county where there are residential communities in the vicinity of Placitas Withdrawal area, namely, Sandoval County of New Mexico (Appendix D – Map 1A and Map 1B).

In 2021, Sandoval County had a population of 147,327 people and a median household income of \$68,947 relatively higher than the state level (\$54,020) and slightly lower than the national level (\$69,021) (Appendix D – Table 3). Its top three sectors by percentage of employed population were (A) educational services, health care and social assistance for 24 percent, (B) wholesale trade and retail trade for 15%, and (C) Professional, scientific, technical and managerial services for 12 percent (Appendix D – Table 5).

The proposed withdrawal has the potential of reducing local employment in the mineral extraction-based industries, reducing mineral revenues, changing economic contribution to the regional economy, and improving ecosystem services (provisioning services, regulating services, cultural services and supporting services) (MEA 2005). However, the analysis conducted for this EA indicates no mineral development applications have been received for the withdrawal area over the past 10-years; no common variety mineral materials have been removed from the public lands proposed for withdrawal since 2008. In addition, the analysis on mineral resources does not indicate specific impacts on mineral resource development for locatable, leasable, and salable minerals. Based on these two conditions, the BLM anticipates that the proposed Placitas Withdrawal would have minimal to low adverse impacts on local employment in the mineral extraction-based industries, mineral revenues, and economic contribution to the regional economy as compared to the no-action alternative. In the long-term, however, there is a potential of improvement of ecosystem services generated from restored ecosystems and habitats in the

area proposed for withdrawal area hence an increase of their values as compared to the no-action alternative.

CHAPTER 4. CONSULTATION AND COORDINATION

The following consultation and coordination efforts with tribes, individuals, organizations, and agencies were conducted for the proposed leasing actions.

4.1 ENDANGERED SPECIES ACT CONSULTATION

An official list of federally threatened and endangered species that may occur in the proposed project location or may be affected by the proposed project was obtained from the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service Information for Planning Consultation (IPaC) project planning and conservation tool (Project Code 2024-0004631) (USFWS 2023). The official species list included seven threatened, endangered, and candidate species that may be present. No designated or proposed critical habitats are present in the project area or vicinity. After a review of the current known range and habitat requirements of the listed species, it was concluded that none of the species or habitat to support the species listed on the IPaC species list are present in the project area. In addition, the proposed withdrawal does not incorporate any surface disturbing activities; therefore, the BLM anticipates that the proposal withdrawal would have no effect on any candidate, threatened, or endangered species listed under the Endangered Species Act, even if such species were present.

4.2 TRIBAL CONSULTATION

The BLM sent notices to the local and federally recognized Tribes on September 18, 2023, informing them of the proposed withdrawal and soliciting any concerns they may have regarding the proposed action and invitations for in-person meetings. Table 4.1, below, provides a list of those tribal authorities consulted.

Table 4.1. Tribal Authorities and Staff Consulted

	Letter Received
Pueblo of Santa Ana, Ulysses Leon, Governor	9/11/2021
Pueblo of Santa Ana, Nathan Garcia, Governor	8/20/2023
Pueblo of Santa Ana, R. Michael Lujan, Lt. Governor	8/20/2023
Pueblo of Santa Ana, Ms. Monica Murrell, THPO	8/20/2023
Jicarilla Apache Nation, Edward Velarde, President	8/20/2023
Jicarilla Apache Nation, Donna Montoya, Cultural Affairs	8/20/2023
Jicarilla Apache Nation, Dr. Jeffrey Blythe, THPO	8/20/2023
Pueblo of San Felipe, Carl Valencia, Governor	8/20/2023
Pueblo of San Felipe, Clyde Aguilar, Lt. Governor	8/20/2023
Pueblo of San Felipe, Ricardo Ortiz, THPO	8/20/2023
Pueblo of San Felipe, Pinu'u Stout, Natural Resources Director	8/20/2023
Pueblo of Zia, Valentino Pino, Governor	8/20/2023
Pueblo of Zia, Francisco Toribio, THPO	8/20/2023
Pueblo de Cochiti, Everett P. Herrera, Governor	8/20/2023
Pueblo de Cochiti, Jacob Pecos, Cultural Resources	8/20/2023
Pueblo of Isleta, Max Zuni, Governor - Attn: Mr. Daniel Waseta	8/20/2023
Pueblo of Isleta, Dr. Henry Walt, THPO	8/20/2023
Pueblo of Sandia, Stuart Paisano, Governor	8/20/2023

Santa Domingo Pueblo, Esquipula Tenorio Sr., Governor	8/20/2023
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The proposed action is not expected to have any direct effects on Tribes or government-to-government relationships and would not limit access to, or inhibit the ceremonial use of, Indian Sacred Sites protected by EO 13007.

During the 90-day comment period on the proposed withdrawal, the RPFO received a letter from the Pueblo of Santa Ana office of the Governor expressing strong support for the withdrawal proposal affirming the cultural significance of the withdrawal tracts to the people of Santa Ana. No requests for in-person meetings were received.

4.3 STATE HISTORIC PRESERVATION OFFICE AND TRIBAL HISTORIC PRESERVATION OFFICE CONSULTATION

The RPFO notified the New Mexico State Historic Preservation Office (SHPO) of the proposed withdrawal via a letter received on September 18th, 2023.

Section 106 of the National Historic Preservation Act and its implementing regulations in 36 C.F.R. § 800 require the Federal Government to consider what effect their undertakings (defined at 54 U.S.C § 300320) may have on properties included on or eligible for inclusion on the National Register of Historic Places (NRHP). The New Mexico BLM has a two-party agreement with the SHPO that implements an authorized alternative to 36 C.F.R. § 800 for most undertakings (BLM and SHPO 2014). This agreement, called the State Protocol, offers a streamlined process for reporting and review that expedites consultation with the SHPO, including a list of undertakings exempt from SHPO consultation.

The BLM RPFO cultural resources specialist determined that this undertaking is exempt from consultation with SHPO per the State Protocol Appendix C.II.b¹. In addition, as the proposed withdrawal does not incorporate any surface disturbing activities, the BLM has determined that a withdrawal such as the one proposed are the type of activity that does not have the potential to cause effects on historic properties, assuming such historic properties were present. 36 C.F.R. § 800.3(a)(1). Therefore, the BLM has no further obligation under section 106.

¹ Appendix C.II.b of the State Protocol applies to issuing or renewing mineral withdrawals.

CHAPTER 5. LIST OF PREPARERS

Table 5.1 contains a list of individuals that contributed to preparation of this EA.

Table 5.1. List of EA Preparers

Name	Title	Office
Brian Novosak	Acting Field Office Manager	BLM, Rio Puerco Field Office
Hebin Lin	Socioeconomic Specialist	BLM, NM State Office
Joshua Freeman	Assistant Field Manager Non-Renewable Resources	BLM, Rio Puerco Field Office
Adam Lujan	Assistant Field Manager Renewable Resources	BLM, Rio Puerco Field Office
Karla Gallegos	Realty Specialist	BLM, Rio Puerco Field Office
Jacob Nowell	Realty Specialist	BLM, Rio Puerco Field Office
Kathleen Rehberg	Geologist	BLM, NM State Office
Stephanie Jeffries	Archaeologist	BLM, Rio Puerco Field Office
Stephanie Herbert	Wildlife Biologist	BLM, Rio Puerco Field Office
Charles Schaub	Hydrologist	BLM, Rio Puerco Field Office
Jackie Leyba	Outdoor Recreation Planner	BLM, Rio Puerco Field Office

CHAPTER 6. LITERATURE CITED

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APPENDIX A. MAPS

Figure A.1. Overview of the proposed withdrawal area analyzed in this EA.

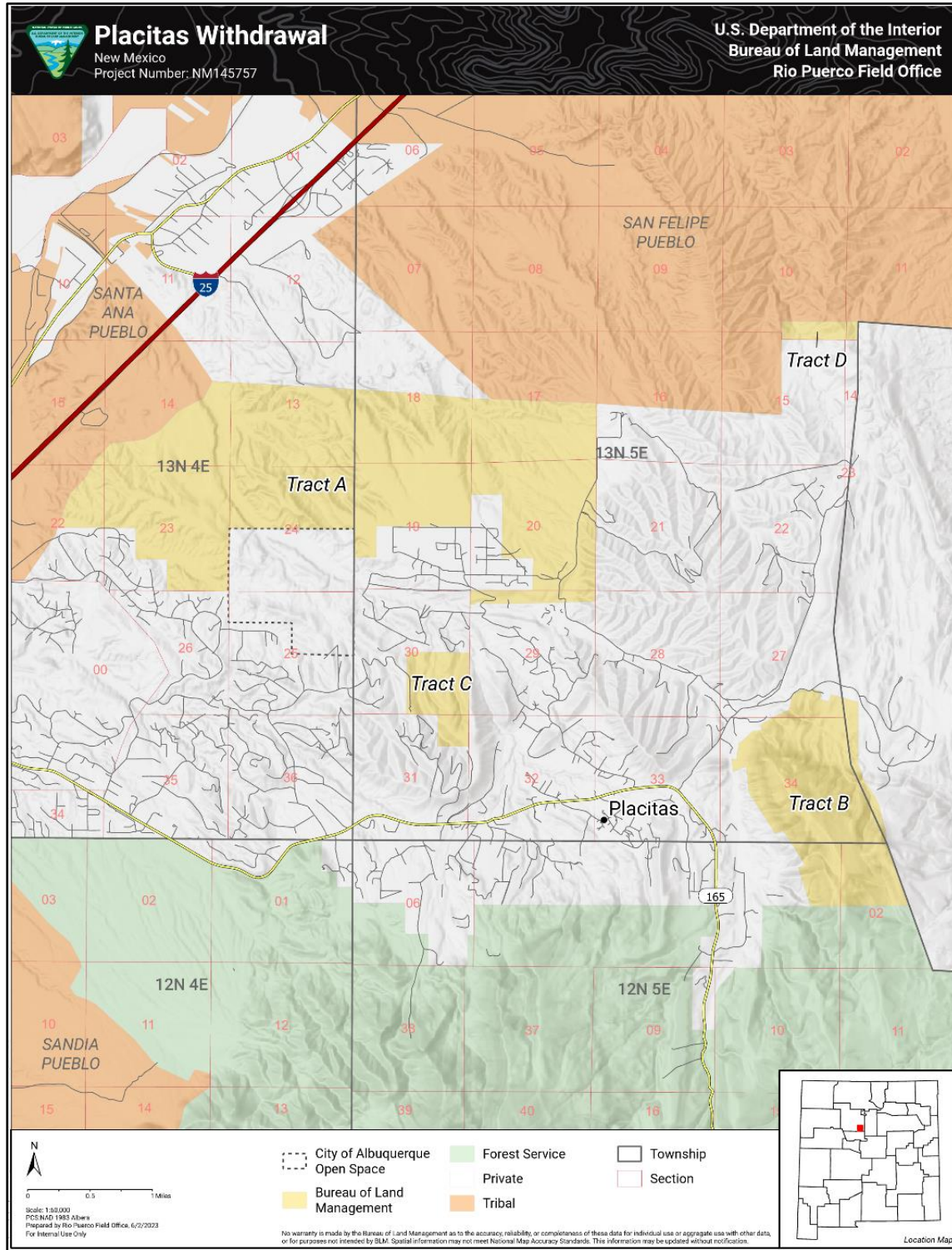


Figure A.2. Tract A analyzed in this EA.

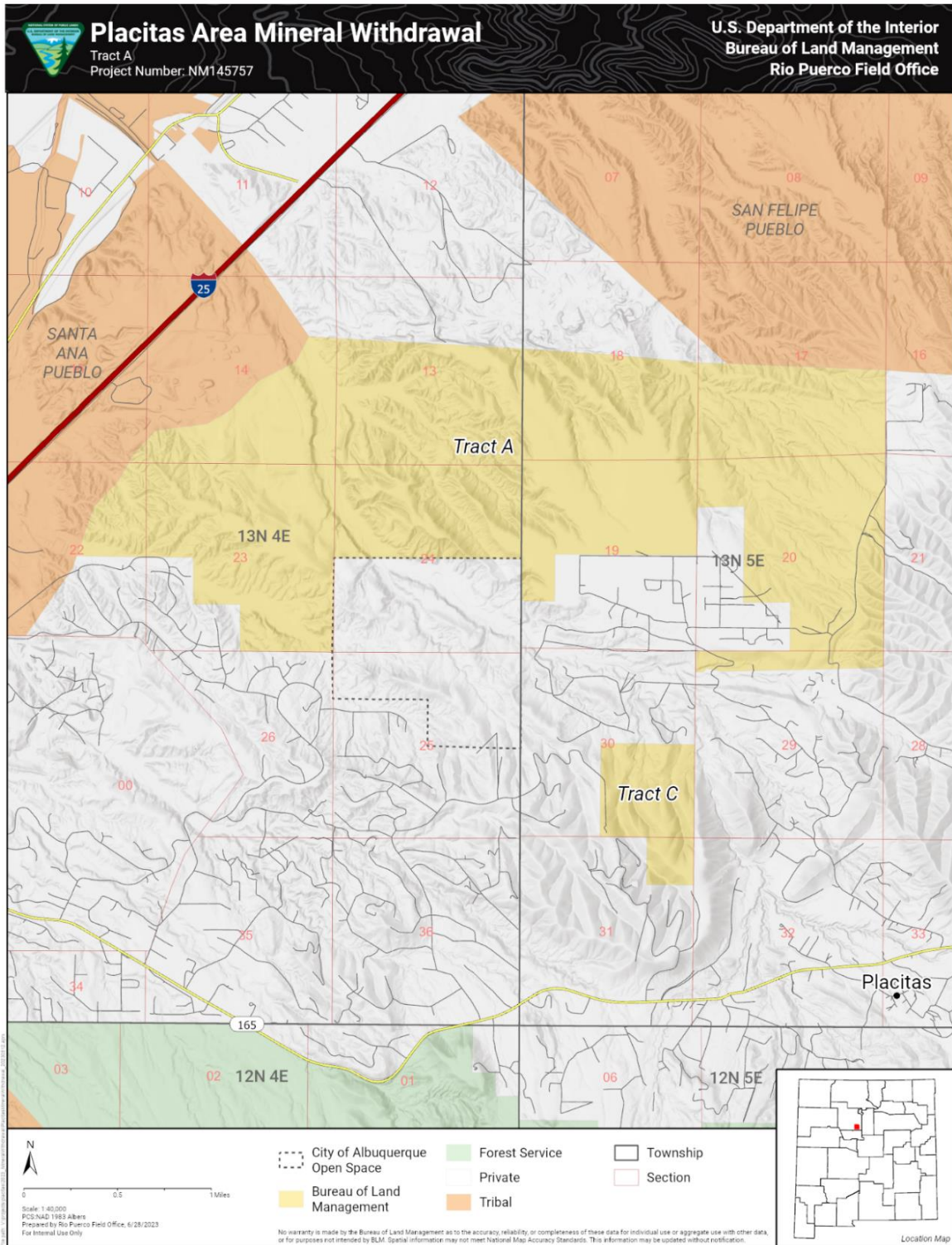


Figure A.3. Tract B analyzed in this EA.

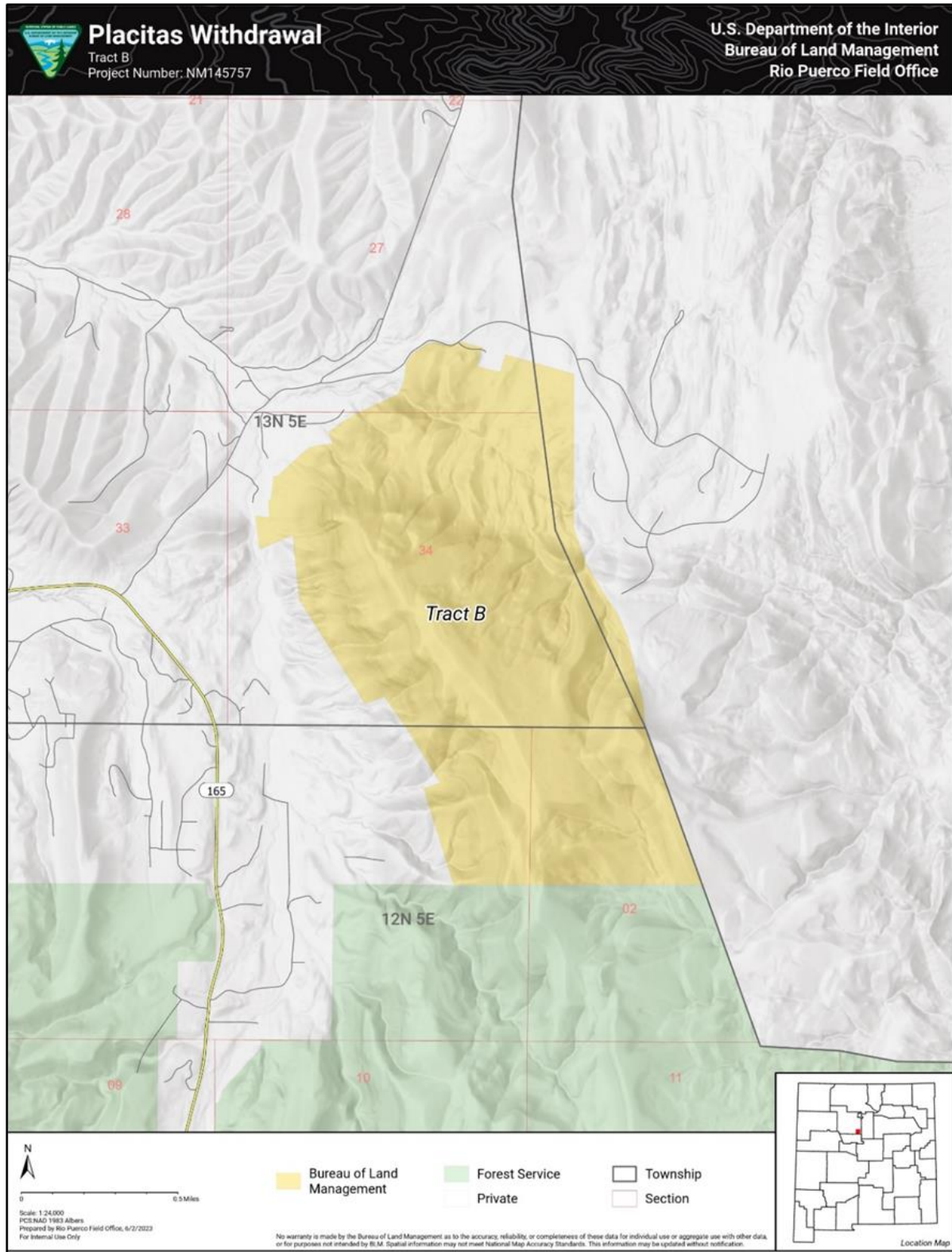


Figure A.4. Tract C analyzed in this EA.

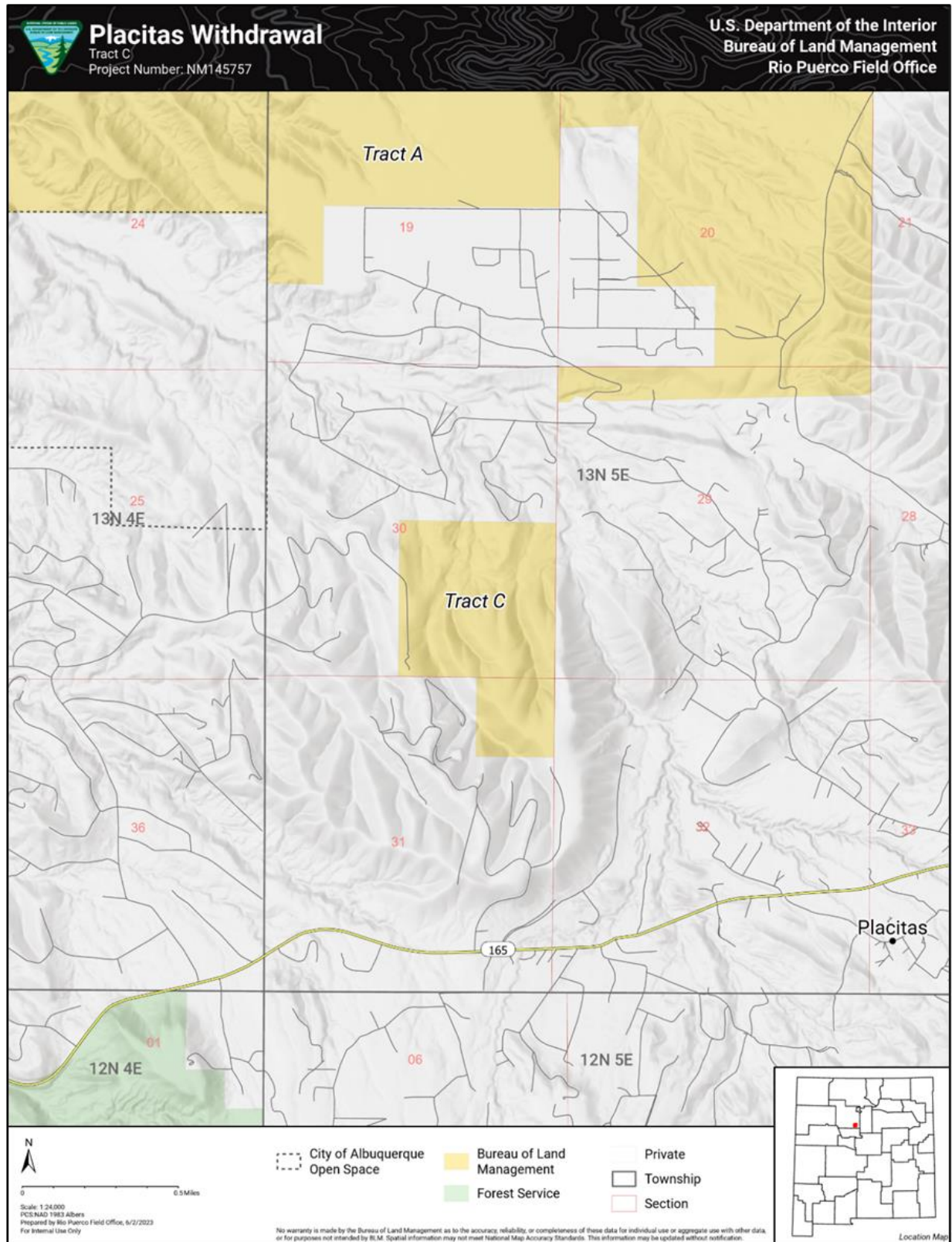


Figure A.5. Tract D analyzed in this EA.

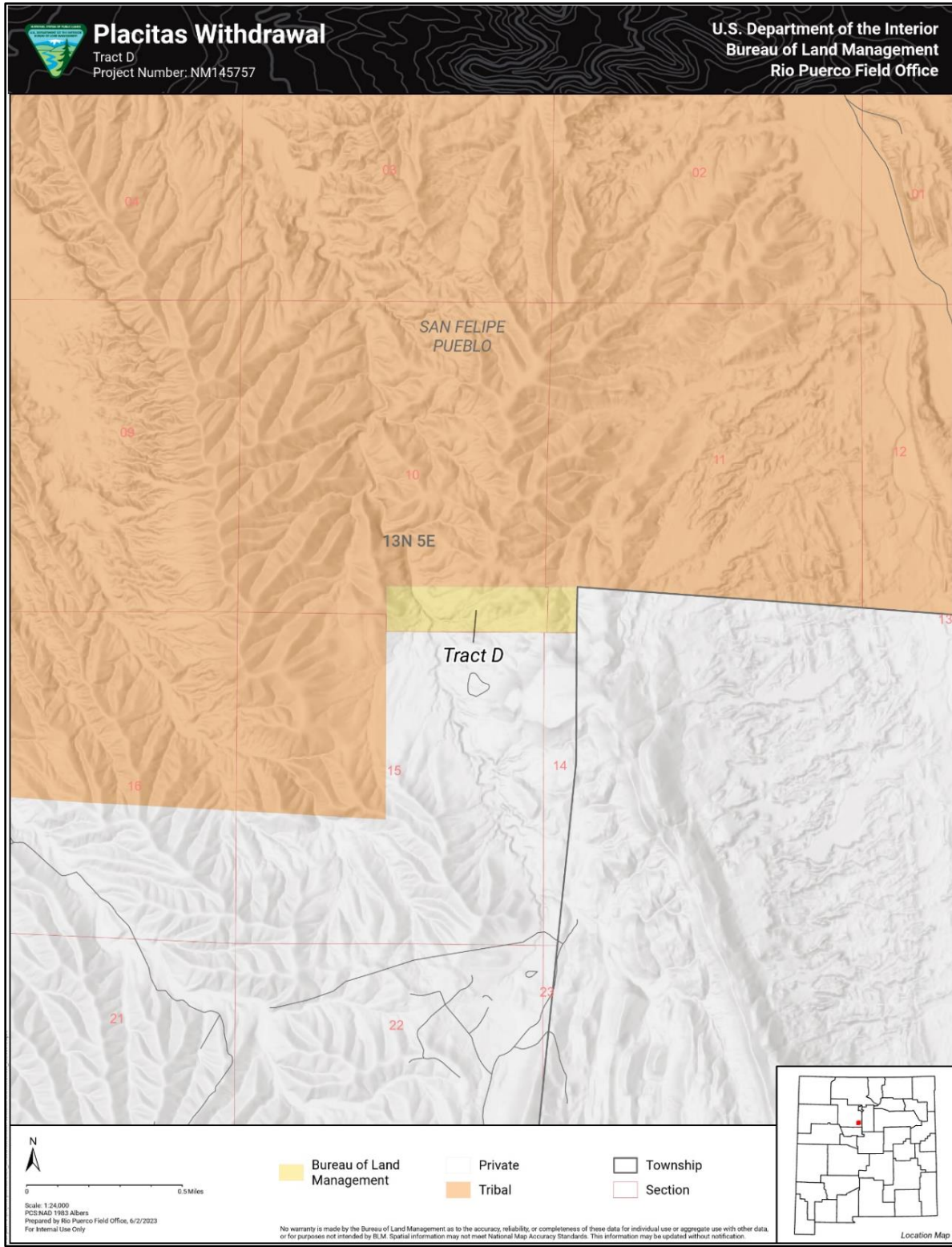
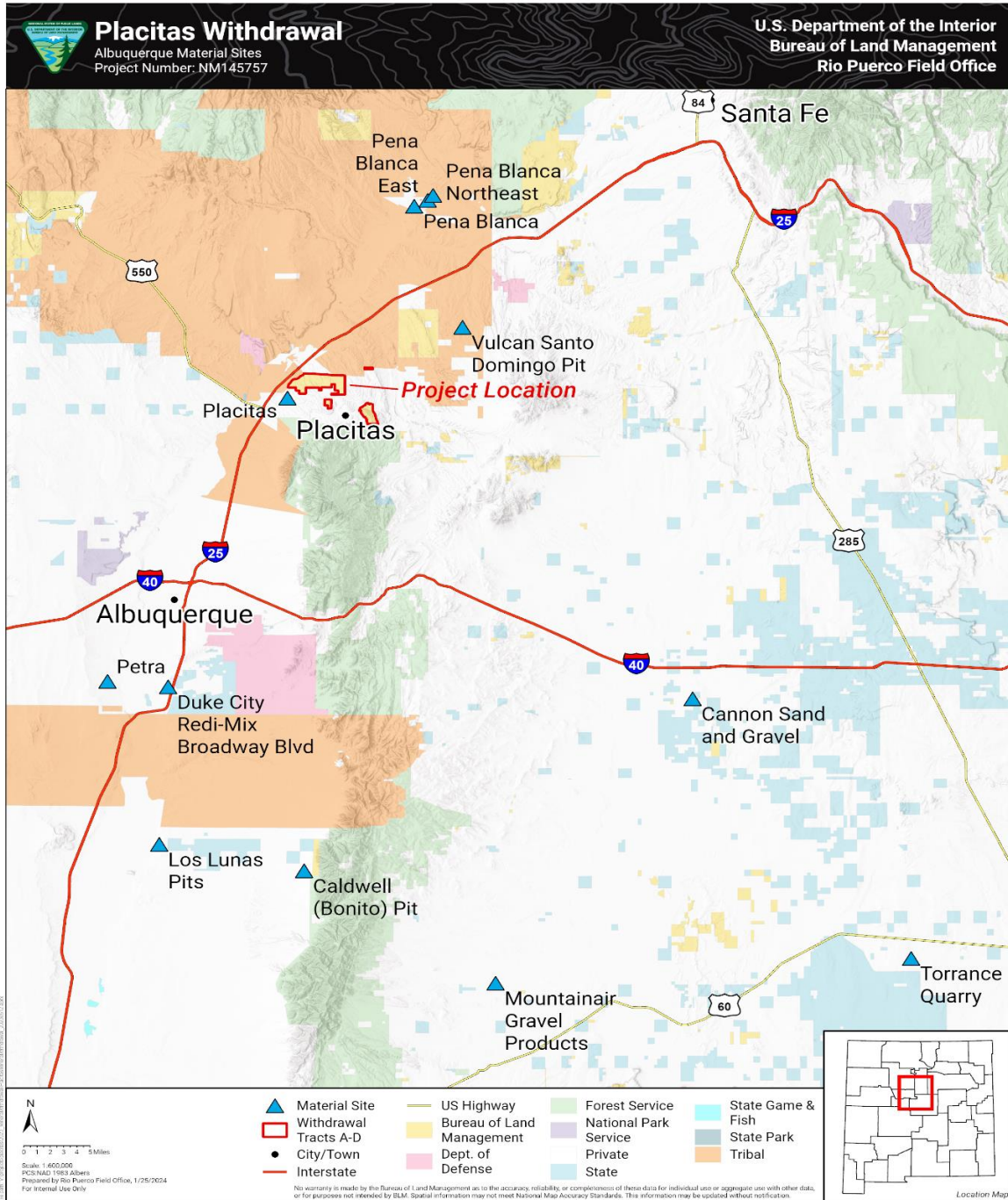


FIGURE A.6 EXSISTING MINES WITHIN ALBUQUERQUE METRO AREA



APPENDIX B. SUBSTANTIVE COMMENTS RECEIVED DURING THE PUBLIC REVIEW PERIOD AND BLM'S RESPONSE

The BLM evaluated all comments received and parsed them into substantive or non-substantive comments according to the guidance in the BLM's NEPA Handbook (H-1790-1; page 66). Example substantive comments contained in Table F.1 are representative of topics raised, and single responses are provided for similarly stated topics.

Table F.1. Substantive Comment Topics and Responses

Comment Number	Topic	Comment Text	Response

APPENDIX C. LEGAL DESCRIPTIONS OF LANDS PROPOSED FOR WITHDRAWAL

New Mexico Principal Meridian, New Mexico

San Antonio de las Huertas Grant,

Parcel C;

Town of Tejon Grant,

tract 40;

T. 13 N., R. 4 E.,

sec. 13, Lots 6 thru 9 and S1/2;

sec. 14, Lots 12 thru 15, E1/2SE1/4, and SW1/4SE1/4;

sec. 15, Lot 10;

sec. 22, Lots 6 and 7 and SE1/4NE1/4;

sec. 23, N1/2, NE1/4SW1/4, and SE1/4;

sec. 24, N1/2;

T. 12 N., R. 5 E.,

Tract 39;

T. 13 N., R. 5 E.,

sec. 10, Lots 14 and 15;

sec.11, Lot 9;

sec. 17, Lots 1, thru 4, S1/2SW1/4, and S1/2SE1/4;

sec. 18, Lots 1 thru 7, SE1/4SW1/4, and S1/2SE1/4;

sec. 19, Lots 1 thru 3, NE1/4, and E1/2NW1/4;

sec. 20, E1/2, E1/2NW1/4, NW1/4NW1/4, and NE1/4SW1/4;

sec. 29, Lots 1 thru 4;

sec. 30, SE1/4;

sec. 31, NE1/4NE1/4;

tract 38;

The areas described aggregate 4212.98 acres.

APPENDIX D. SOCIOECONOMICS AND ENVIRONMENTAL JUSTICE

(1) REGULATIONS AND POLICIES

The Executive Order 12898 (1994) entitled Federal Actions to Address Environmental Justice in Minority Populations and Low-Income Populations (1994) requires that “each Federal agency shall make achieving environmental justice part of its mission by identifying and addressing, as appropriate, disproportionately high and adverse human health or environmental effects of its programs, policies, and activities on minority populations and low-income populations in the United States and its territories and possessions, the District of Columbia, the Commonwealth of Puerto Rico, and the Commonwealth of the Mariana Islands.”

For implementation of Executive Order 12898, the Council on Environmental Quality (CEQ), part of the Executive Office of the President, issued the Environmental Justice Guidance under the National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA) (1997) which provides the following statements:

- “Each Federal agency should analyze the environmental effects, including human health, economic, and social effects of Federal actions, including effects on minority populations, low-income populations, and Indian tribes, when such analysis is required by NEPA.”
- Minority populations are “individual(s) who are members of the following population groups: American Indian or Alaskan Native; Asian or Pacific Islander; Black, not of Hispanic origin; or Hispanic,”
- “Minority populations should be identified where either: (a) the minority population of the affected area exceeds 50 percent or (b) the minority population percentage of the affected area is meaningfully greater than the minority population percentage in the general population or other appropriate unit of geographic analysis.”
- “Low-income populations in an affected area should be identified with the annual statistical poverty thresholds from the Bureau of the Census’ Current Population Reports, Series P-60 on Income and Poverty.”
- “The Executive Order recognizes the importance of research, data collection, and analysis, particularly with respect to multiple and cumulative exposures to environmental hazards for low-income populations, minority populations, and Indian tribes. Thus, data on these exposure issues should be incorporated into NEPA analyses as appropriate.”

In September 2022, the BLM published an Instruction Memorandum on Environmental Justice Implementation (<https://www.blm.gov/policy/im2022-059>) which reflects the following five criteria for determining whether a community is an environmental justice community:

- EJ community criterion 1: minority population higher than 50%
- EJ community criterion 2: minority population higher than 110% of reference area
- EJ community criterion 3: low-income population higher than 50%
- EJ community criterion 4: low-income population higher than 100% of reference area
- EJ community criterion 5: tribal communities

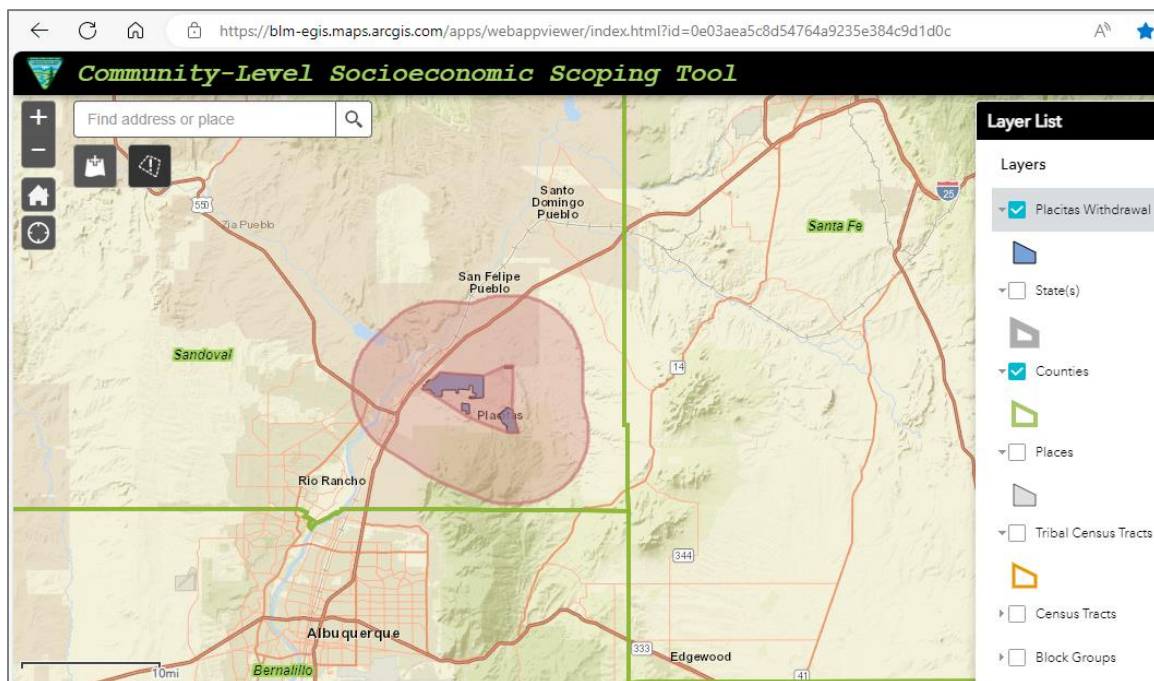
If at least one answer to the above 5 criteria is yes, then overall the community is an EJ community.

(2) GEOGRAPHICAL CONTEXT

The following six communities in Sandoval County, New Mexico, in the vicinity of the Placitas Withdrawal area are identified.

- (1) San Felipe Pueblo CDP (census designated place)
- (2) Algodones CDP
- (3) Santa Ana Pueblo CDP
- (4) Bernalillo Town
- (5) Placitas CDP (Sandoval County)
- (6) La Madera CDP (Sandoval County)

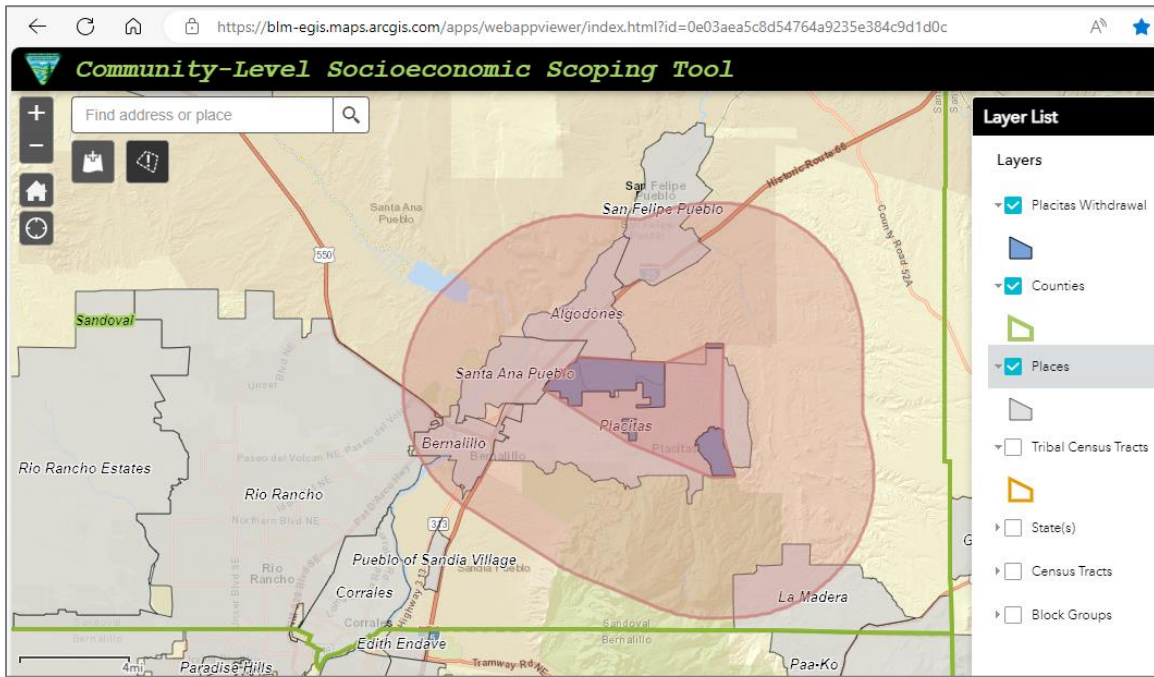
All six communities are located within a radius of 5 miles from the Placitas withdrawal area and along the Interstate Highway 25. The indexing of the six communities from (1) to (6) corresponds to a general north to south and west to east direction on Map 1A, Map 1B and Map 1C. This indexing is used throughout this analysis especially in the “(5) Findings, Insights and Conclusions” sub-section.



Map 1A. Analysis Area

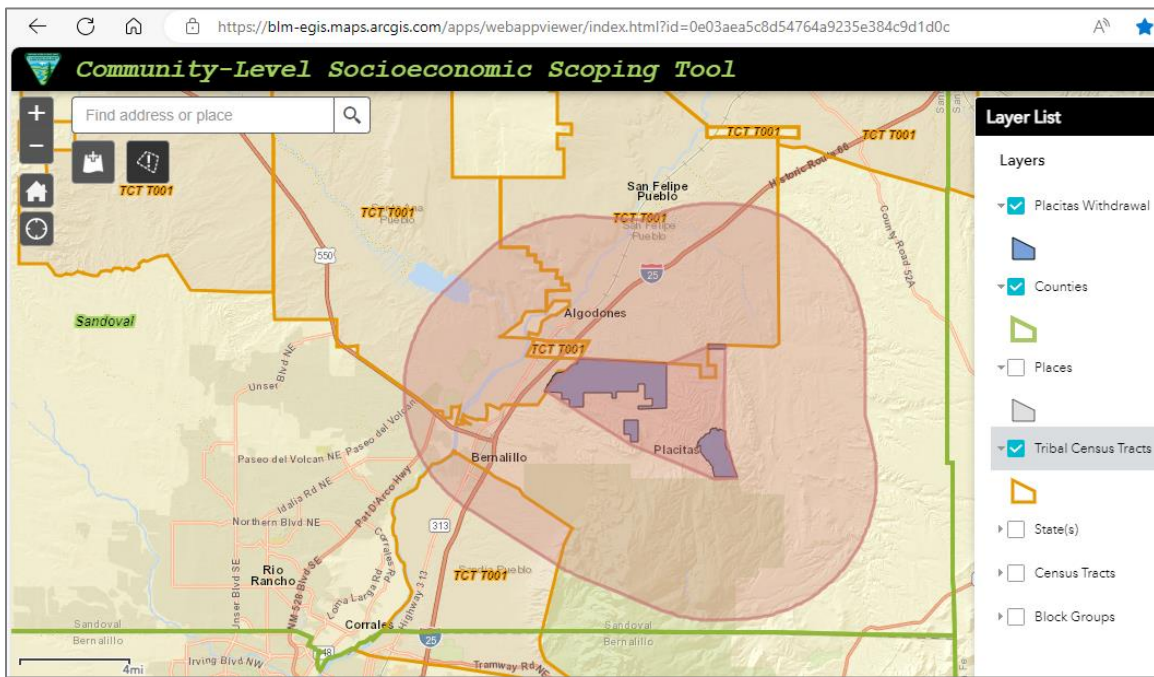
(Data source: developed based on USCB 2022c)

Map 1B. Analysis Area: Communities



(Data source: developed based on USCB 2022c)

Map 1C. Analysis Area: Tribal Communities



(Data source: developed based on USCB 2022c)

(3) DATA SOURCES AND STATISTICAL UNITS

The data source for this analysis is the American Community Survey (ACS) 5-Year Estimates published every year by the U.S. Census Bureau with the primary rationale that “the American Community Survey provides a wide range of important statistics about people and housing for every community in the nation. This survey is the only source of local estimates for most of the more than 40 topics it covers for communities across the nation.” (USCB 2022b)

The statistical units for this analysis are places, including cities, towns, villages, boroughs and census designated places (CDPs) when data are available at the level of places; otherwise, census tracts which are small and relatively permanent statistical subdivisions of a county or statistically equivalent entity that can be updated by local participants prior to each decennial. Census tracts generally have a population size between 1,200 and 8,000 people, with an optimum size of 4,000 people (USCB 2022d).

(4) DATA FOR COMMUNITIES

The datasets in this analysis are from both the latest 2017-2021 American Community Survey 5-Year Estimates and 2012-2016 American Community Survey 5-Year Estimates (USCB 2022a) are compiled for the following key indicators.

- (A) Population
- (B) Median household income
- (C) Low-income population
- (D) Ethnicity composition
- (E) Unemployment rate
- (F) Population composition by age
- (G) Population with less than high school education (that is, percent of individuals aged 25 and over with less than high school degree)
- (H) Limited English speaking (that is, the percentage of households in which no member 14 years old and over speaks only English or speaks a non-English language and speaks English “very well”)
- (I) Employment by sector

The results of the datasets are presented in Table 1 through Table 5 and Figure 1 through Figure 2.

- Table 1 Reference Area: Environmental Justice Considerations
 - Table 2 Analysis Area: Environmental Justice Considerations
 - Table 3 Analysis Area: Primary Socioeconomic Indicators
 - Table 4 Analysis Area: Additional Socioeconomic Indicators
 - Table 5 Analysis Area: Employment by Sector
 - Figure 1 Analysis Area: Primary Socioeconomic Indicators
 - Figure 2 Analysis Area: Additional Socioeconomic Indicators
-

Table 1 Reference Area: Environmental Justice Considerations

Reference area	Sandoval County	New Mexico	United States
Total population in 2021	147,327	2,109,366	329,725,481
Median household incomes (\$) in 2021	68,947	54,020	69,021
Low-income population in 2021	26.1%	39.1%	29.2%
Minority population in 2021	58.0%	64.0%	40.6%

Data source: compiled based on USCB, 2022a, 2017-2021 American Community Survey 5-Year Estimates.

Table 2 Analysis Area: Environmental Justice Considerations

Analysis area	San Felipe Pueblo CDP	Algodones CDP	Santa Ana Pueblo CDP	Bernalillo town	Placitas CDP	La Madera CDP
Reference area	Sandoval County	Sandoval County	Sandoval County	Sandoval County	Sandoval County	Sandoval County
Total population in 2021	1,868	993	1,036	9,049	3,863	447
Median household incomes (\$) in 2021	36,583	40,694	54,545	54,850	89,809	130,962
Low-income population in 2021	56.7%	36.6%	41.9%	38.1%	10.8%	35.6%
Minority population in 2021	99.7%	78.8%	99.9%	71.0%	23.3%	33.3%
EJ community criterion 1: minority population higher than 50%	YES	YES	YES	YES	NO	NO
EJ community criterion 2: minority population higher than 110% of reference area	YES	YES	YES	YES	NO	NO
EJ community criterion 3: low-income population higher than 50%	YES	NO	NO	NO	NO	NO
EJ community criterion 4: low-income population higher than 100% of reference area	YES	YES	YES	YES	NO	YES
EJ community criterion 5: tribal community	YES	YES	YES	YES	YES	NO
EJ community (overall)	YES	YES	YES	YES	YES	YES

Note: "n/a" indicates that the data point is not available.

Data source: compiled based on USCB, 2022a, 2017-2021 American Community Survey 5-Year Estimates.

Table 3 Analysis Area: Primary Socioeconomic Indicators

Analysis area	San Felipe Pueblo CDP	Algodones CDP	Santa Ana Pueblo CDP	Bernalillo town	Placitas CDP	La Madera CDP	Sandoval County	New Mexico	United States
Total population in 2016	2,858	829	619	8,676	4,853	n/a	138,117	2,082,669	318,558,162
Hispanic or Latino in 2016	0.2%	49.6%	3.7%	62.4%	24.8%	n/a	37.3%	47.8%	17.3%
Not Hispanic or Latino (white alone) population in 2016	0.1%	31.2%	0.0%	26.1%	69.4%	n/a	45.1%	38.7%	62.0%
Not Hispanic or Latino (other race) population in 2016	99.7%	19.2%	96.3%	11.4%	5.8%	n/a	17.7%	13.5%	20.7%
Median household incomes (\$) in 2016	58,433	54,454	55,162	47,622	85,571	n/a	68,070	51,681	62,598
Low-income population in 2016	63.0%	28.5%	42.0%	42.4%	11.7%	n/a	32.4%	42.8%	33.6%
Minority population in 2016	99.9%	68.8%	100.0%	73.9%	30.6%	n/a	54.9%	61.3%	38.0%
Total population in 2021	1,868	993	1,036	9,049	3,863	447	147,327	2,109,366	329,725,481
Hispanic or Latino population in 2021	6.4%	65.7%	4.9%	64.0%	15.6%	28.2%	40.3%	49.6%	18.4%
Not Hispanic or Latino (white alone) population in 2021	0.3%	21.2%	0.1%	29.0%	76.7%	66.7%	42.0%	36.0%	59.4%
Not Hispanic or Latino (other race) population in 2021	93.3%	13.1%	95.0%	7.1%	7.6%	5.1%	17.8%	14.4%	22.1%
Median household incomes (\$) in 2021	36,583	40,694	54,545	54,850	89,809	130,962	68,947	54,020	69,021
Low-income population in 2021	56.7%	36.6%	41.9%	38.1%	10.8%	35.6%	26.1%	39.1%	29.2%
Minority population in 2021	99.7%	78.8%	99.9%	71.0%	23.3%	33.3%	58.0%	64.0%	40.6%

Note: "n/a" indicates that the data point is not available.

Data source: compiled based on USCB, 2022a, 2017-2021 American Community Survey 5-Year Estimates and 2012-2016 American Community Survey 5-Year Estimates; U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics, 2023, Consumer Price Index Retroactive Series (R-CPI-U-RS), U.S. City Average, All Items.

Table 4 Analysis Area: Additional Socioeconomic Indicators

Analysis area	San Felipe Pueblo CDP	Algodones CDP	Santa Ana Pueblo CDP	Bernalillo town	Placitas CDP	La Madera CDP	Sandoval County	New Mexico	United States
Unemployment rates in 2016	28.0%	4.2%	14.4%	11.2%	4.2%	n/a	8.5%	8.5%	7.4%
Population under age 5 in 2016	7.1%	2.5%	4.0%	4.9%	1.0%	n/a	5.8%	6.4%	6.2%
Population age 5 to 64 in 2016	85.4%	77.7%	81.9%	75.2%	67.5%	n/a	79.1%	78.3%	79.3%
Population over age 64 in 2016	7.5%	19.8%	14.1%	19.9%	31.5%	n/a	15.0%	15.3%	14.5%
Population with less than high school education in 2016	26.4%	16.6%	6.7%	18.0%	2.7%	n/a	9.2%	15.4%	13.0%
Limited English speaking households in 2016	6.8%	2.6%	2.9%	4.9%	0.7%	n/a	2.1%	5.1%	4.5%
Unemployment rates in 2021	17.4%	3.6%	6.7%	7.4%	3.3%	28.8%	7.0%	6.6%	5.5%
Population under age 5 in 2021	8.8%	1.4%	4.0%	3.9%	1.7%	0.0%	5.2%	5.7%	5.9%
Population age 5 to 64 in 2021	82.5%	70.6%	85.2%	71.7%	55.7%	86.6%	76.8%	76.8%	78.1%
Population over 64 in 2021	8.7%	28.0%	10.8%	24.4%	42.6%	13.4%	18.0%	17.5%	16.0%
Population with less than high school education in 2021	33.1%	12.7%	10.6%	20.9%	1.6%	0.0%	8.6%	13.2%	11.1%
Limited English speaking households in 2021	25.6%	15.5%	15.1%	12.4%	2.3%	0.0%	4.6%	5.3%	4.2%

Note: "n/a" indicates that the data point is not available.

Data source: compiled based on USCB, 2022a, 2017-2021 American Community Survey 5-Year Estimates and 2012-2016 American Community Survey 5-Year Estimates.

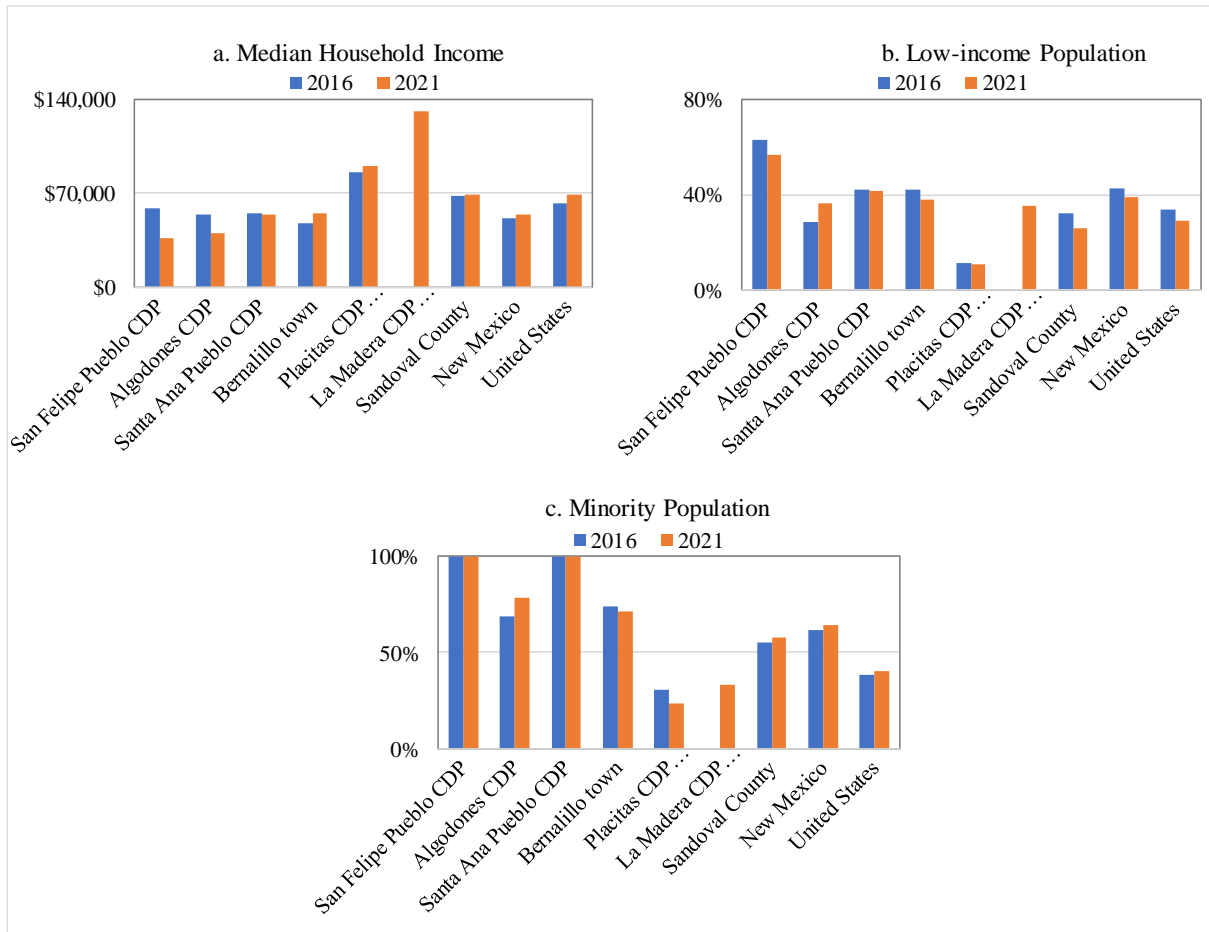
Table 5 Analysis Area: Employment by Sector in 2021

Analysis area	San Felipe Pueblo CDP	Algodones CDP	Santa Ana Pueblo CDP	Bernalillo town	Placitas CDP	La Madera CDP	Sandoval County	New Mexico	United States
ADM (2016)	11%	14%	15%	7%	11%	n/a	8%	8%	5%
ART (2016)	23%	17%	31%	12%	8%	n/a	10%	11%	10%
CON (2016)	9%	9%	4%	16%	7%	n/a	7%	7%	6%
EDU (2016)	27%	15%	26%	19%	20%	n/a	25%	25%	23%
FIN (2016)	2%	5%	2%	5%	10%	n/a	6%	5%	7%
INFO (2016)	2%	2%	2%	1%	4%	n/a	2%	2%	2%
MANU (2016)	2%	8%	3%	8%	7%	n/a	7%	5%	10%
NAT (2016)	2%	0%	4%	1%	3%	n/a	1%	4%	2%
OTHER (2016)	0%	3%	1%	5%	2%	n/a	4%	5%	5%
SCI (2016)	9%	11%	4%	11%	13%	n/a	11%	11%	11%
TRADE (2016)	13%	5%	4%	14%	11%	n/a	14%	14%	14%
TRANS (2016)	3%	10%	3%	3%	5%	n/a	4%	4%	5%
ADM (2021)	9%	11%	30%	7%	8%	11%	8%	8%	5%
ART (2021)	31%	14%	24%	10%	5%	27%	9%	10%	9%
CON (2021)	10%	4%	3%	9%	5%	0%	7%	7%	7%
EDU (2021)	25%	12%	15%	20%	28%	12%	24%	26%	23%
FIN (2021)	2%	2%	1%	8%	4%	0%	7%	5%	7%
INFO (2021)	1%	1%	0%	2%	2%	0%	2%	1%	2%
MANU (2021)	4%	1%	1%	6%	3%	0%	5%	4%	10%
NAT (2021)	2%	0%	1%	3%	2%	0%	1%	4%	2%
OTHER (2021)	0%	1%	5%	5%	1%	20%	5%	5%	5%
SCI (2021)	4%	17%	5%	14%	26%	30%	12%	12%	12%
TRADE (2021)	10%	14%	16%	13%	14%	0%	15%	13%	14%
TRANS (2021)	2%	24%	0%	5%	2%	0%	4%	5%	6%

Notes: ADM – Public administration and government; ART – Arts, entertainment, recreation, accommodation and food services; CON – Construction; EDU – Educational services, health care and social assistance; FIN – Finance, insurance, real estate, rental and leasing; INFO – Information; MAN – Manufacturing; NAT – Natural resources, agriculture and mining; OTHER – Other services, except public administration; SCI – Professional, scientific, technical and managerial services; TRADE – Wholesale trade and retail trade; TRANS – Transportation and warehousing and utilities; highlights in orange color, blue color and green color represent the top 1 through top 3 employment by population, respectively; “n/a” indicates that the data point is not available.

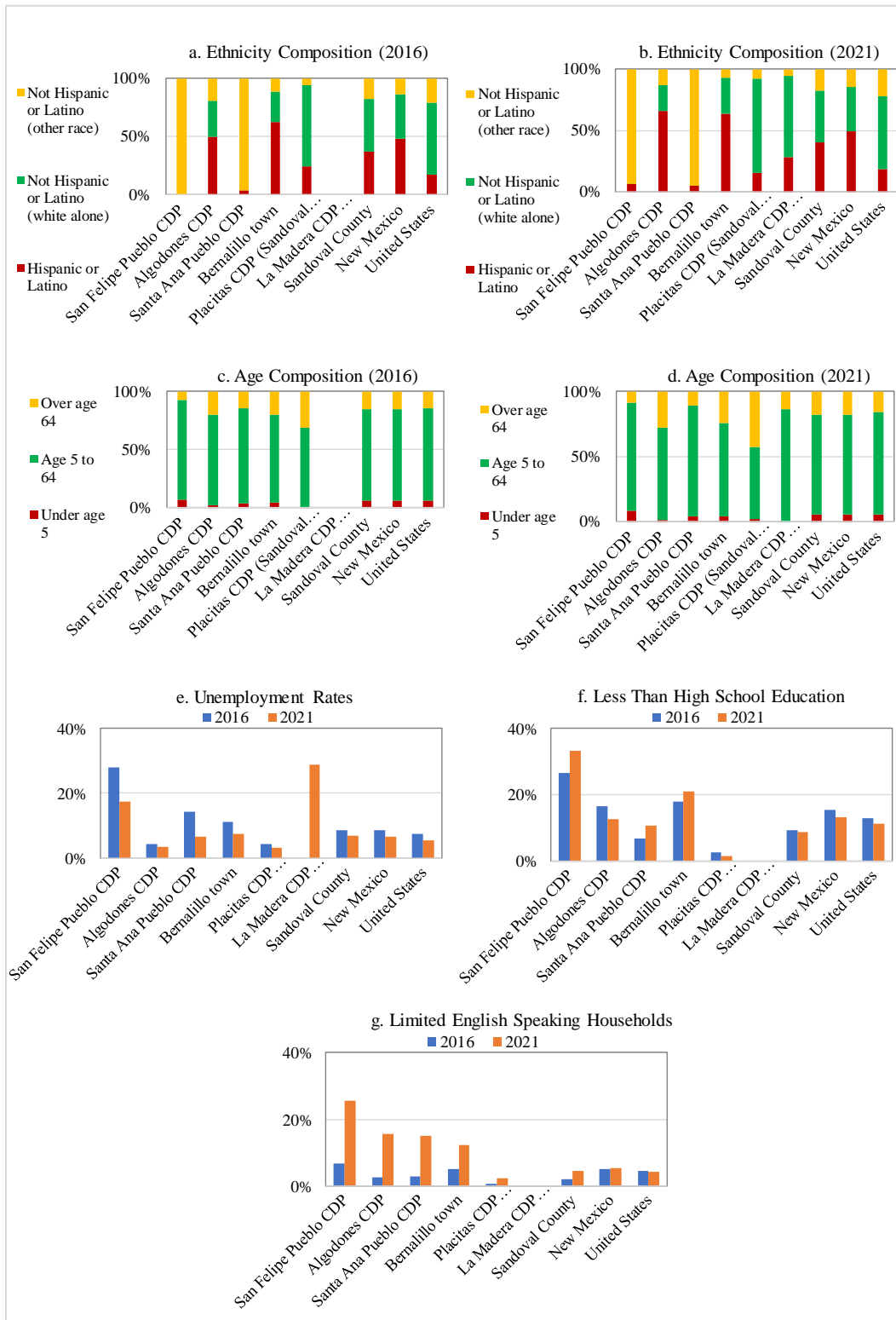
Data source: compiled based on USCB, 2022a, 2017-2021 American Community Survey 5-Year Estimates and 2012-2016 American Community Survey 5-Year Estimates.

Figure 1 Analysis Area: Primary Socioeconomic Indicators



Data source: compiled based on USCB, 2022a, 2017-2021 American Community Survey 5-Year Estimates and 2012-2016 American Community Survey 5-Year Estimates; U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics, 2023, Consumer Price Index Retroactive Series (R-CPI-U-RS), U.S. City Average, All Items.

Figure 2 Analysis Area: Additional Socioeconomic Indicators



Data source: compiled based on USCB, 2022a, 2017-2021 American Community Survey 5-Year Estimates and 2012-2016 American Community Survey 5-Year Estimates.

(5) FINDINGS, INSIGHTS AND CONCLUSIONS

The data compiled, analyzed and presented in Map 1A, Map 1B and Map 1C, Table 1, Table 2, and Figure 1 indicate that, for the recent year 2021, all six communities within a radius of 5 miles from the Placitas withdrawal area should be considered as an environmental justice community of concern (Table 2).

- (1) San Felipe Pueblo CDP based on EJ community criteria 1, 2, 3, 4 and 5
- (2) Algodones CDP, (3) Santa Ana Pueblo CDP, and (4) Bernalillo Town based on EJ community criteria 1, 2, 4 and 5
- (5) Placitas CDP based on EJ community criterion 5
- (6) La Madera CDP based on EJ community criterion 4

EJ community criteria refer to the following.

- EJ community criterion 1: minority population higher than 50%
- EJ community criterion 2: minority population higher than 110% of reference area
- EJ community criterion 3: low-income population higher than 50%
- EJ community criterion 4: low-income population higher than 100% of reference area
- EJ community criterion 5: tribal communities

The data compiled, analyzed and presented in Map 1, Table 3, Table 4, Table 5, and Figure 2 indicate the following key socioeconomic characteristics of the analysis area in the year 2016 and the year 2021.

- In terms of the size of community, (6) La Madera CDP had population less than 500 people in 2021. (3) Santa Ana Pueblo CDP had a population increase by more than 50% from 2016 to 2021.
- In terms of income change, both (1) San Felipe Pueblo CDP and (2) Algodones CDP had decreased incomes by more than 20% from 2016 to 2021.
- In terms of poverty level (that is, low-income population), (1) San Felipe Pueblo CDP had remarkably higher levels in 2021 (more than 200% of the county level).
- In terms of unemployment level, both (1) San Felipe Pueblo CDP and (6) La Madera CDP had remarkably higher levels in 2021 (more than 200% of the county level and state level).
- In terms of senior population (that is, over age 64), (5) Placitas CDP had a remarkably higher level in 2021 (more than 200% of the county level and the state level).
- In terms of education limitation (that is, less than high school), both (1) San Felipe Pueblo CDP and (4) Bernalillo Town had a remarkably higher level in 2021 (more than 200% of the county level).
- In terms of language limitation (that is, limited English speaking), (1) San Felipe Pueblo CDP, (2) Algodones CDP, (3) Santa Ana Pueblo CDP, and (4) Bernalillo Town had a remarkably higher level in 2021 (more than 200% of the county level and state level).
- In terms of employed labor forces by sectors in 2021, the six communities overall had major employment in three sectors: (A) Educational services, health care and social assistance, (B) Arts, entertainment, recreation, accommodation and food services, and (C) Professional, scientific, technical and managerial services; they had least employment in these three sectors: (D) Information; (E) Natural resources, agriculture and mining; and (F) Manufacturing.

Based on the analyses conducted for the identified resource issues of this project, the geographical locations of the communities, the potential uses of the resources by the communities, and the combinations of socioeconomic characteristics of the communities:

- There are no disproportionately high and adverse human and environmental impacts on the EJ communities;
- The communities in (1) San Felipe Pueblo CDP and (6) La Madera CDP could be identified as having priority concerns that would benefit from programs with the potential to reduce poverty level and improve employment level.
- The communities in (2) Algodones CDP, (3) Santa Ana Pueblo CDP, and (4) Bernalillo Town could be identified as having priority concerns that would benefit from programs with the potential to improve education attainment level and promote language diversity; and
- The communities in (5) Placitas CDP could be identified as having priority concerns that would benefit from programs with the potential to support senior population.

(6) REFERENCES

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