Appendix B- Visual Assessment

SCENIC CALIFORNIA 247

County of San Bernardino

Scenic Highway Proposal *for* SR 247



VISUAL ASSESSMENT & MAPS

The nearly untouched vistas adjoining many miles of STATE ROUTE 247 give travelers a trip in time. The California High Desert experience, what you might have seen in years gone by if you had been trailing nomadic tribes, miners, freighters, ranchers or homesteaders. Not paved until the 1950s, it remains rural and intriguing for astronomers, off-roaders, rockhounds, sport climbers, photographers, naturalists, history-lovers and film-makers.

The whole drive from Yucca Valley to Barstow gives you a linear view of Mojave Desert geology, plant life, and history, hard to find anywhere else.

You drive through mountains, sandy slopes, fantastic rock outcrops, cinder cones and lava flows, and past a mind-boggling prehistoric landslide.

This territory is home to the "King Clone" Creosote ring – the oldest organism on earth. Hidden amid millions more Creosote bushes through which SR 247 travels, it remained undiscovered until the arrival of the airplane.

Dense stands of Joshua trees reflect the varying dependability of rainfall along the route, increasing in numbers below canyons that funnel marine layer moisture down from the Bighorn Mountains.

Yuccas proliferate, especially in the Goat Pass region between the Ord Mountains and Stoddard Ridge.

You see Old Woman Springs Ranch and Slash X Ranch, modern relics of early 20th Century cattle-ranching days below both sides of Goat Pass.

A trip in time like no other, this ancient trail now links us to renowned vacation destinations including the mountains of Big Bear and Joshua Tree National Park, and other scenic routes including the Route 66 Mother Road National Monument.



The Scenic 247 Committee of the Homestead Valley Community Council have collaborated on this Visual Assessment for their campaign for achieving State Scenic Highway status for SR 247.

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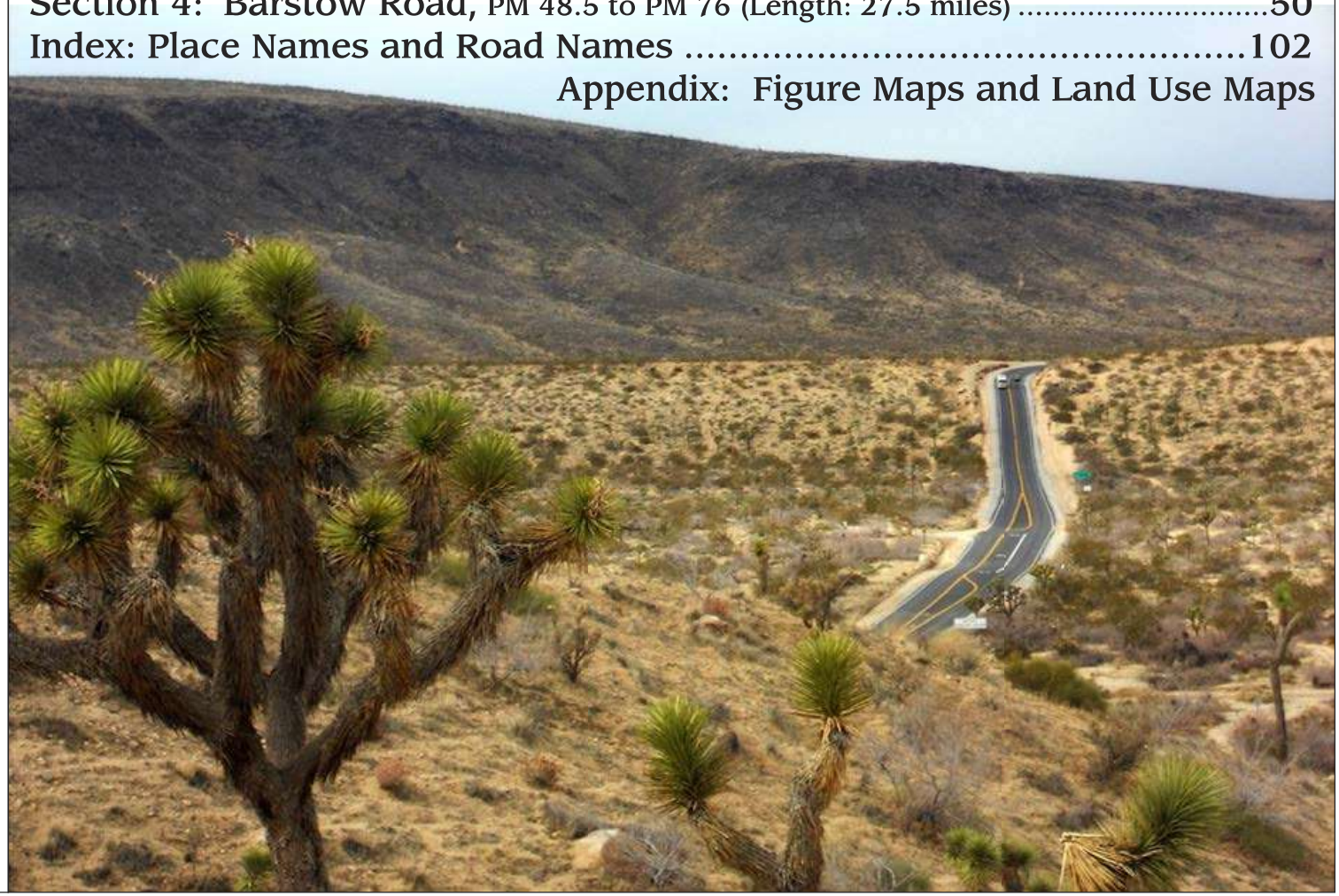
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SCENIC CALIFORNIA 247

Visual Assessment
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Request for Consideration of Officially Designated Scenic Highway Status for Four Sections of State Route 247 in Southern California's Mojave Desert

SR 247 traverses a generally northwest direction, leaving the Town of Yucca Valley at the intersection with State Route 62 (SR 62). The highway travels north through Yucca Mesa, Flamingo Heights, the western edge of Landers, and then westward along the foothills of the north side of the Bighorn Mountains through Johnson Valley.

SR 247 meets State Route 18 (SR 18) in Lucerne Valley, then makes a 90-degree turn. It continues north across Lucerne Dry Lake, through the Ord Mountains and across the great Stoddard Valley before ending at its junction with Interstate 15 (I-15) in the City of Barstow. The route overall is 78 miles, entirely within the County of San Bernardino.

After much consideration, 48 miles of SR 247 are selected for this proposal, the most pristine areas of intact natural scenic beauty in the Mojave Desert visible from the highway.

The proposal is consistent with the County General Plan. The highway is listed as a County Scenic Byway and has "eligible" status for designation as a State Scenic Highway.

San Bernardino County land uses and codes are consistent with Caltrans Scenic Highway requirements. County Code *Chapter 82.19.40 Development Criteria within Scenic Areas* has regulations for protection of the Scenic Highway. Other County Code sections relate to uses, overlays, outdoor advertising, grading, clearing, landscaping, design and appearance.

Development code amendments related to industrial renewable energy provide additional protections in the County's Renewable Energy and Conservation Element.

Historically, SR 247 was two roads: Old Woman Springs Rd. (Yucca Valley to Lucerne Valley) and Barstow Rd. (Lucerne Valley to Barstow).

In 1972, San Bernardino County relinquished the roads to the State of California to become SR 247. The original names for the two sections of the highway continue in common use. SR 247 is still a two-lane "backcountry" highway, as it has been since it was first graded in 1958. It travels through high desert regions where little has changed for hundreds of years.

The Mojave Desert is one of the largest intact ecosystem in North America. Vast swaths of land on both sides of the highway are designated as wildlife corridors and BLM ACEC's (Areas of Critical Environmental Concern.) Landforms and topographic features are varied and layered.

Especially remarkable are the intact long-distance views from the highway. Travelers are delighted by desert plant life that is both visually sculptural and well-suited for survival in the dry landscape.

The iconic Joshua tree appears alone and in forest stands. Mojave Yucca and Creosote bush prevail. Springtime wildflowers can be astonishing. Of particular interest is the "King Clone" in the Soggy Dry Lake Creosote Ring BLM ACEC. Located about a mile from the highway (and not visible to a traveler), this 55-foot diameter ring of genetically identical creosote plants is thought to be the oldest living organism on earth. Knowledge of its significance adds to travelers' understanding of the unique conditions which allow it and other plant forms to live up to thousands of years in the Mojave Desert environment.

The Mojave draws tourists from around the world to experience its unique environment. SR 247 features stunningly beautiful sweeping landscapes rich in history, lore and artifacts reflecting ancient Native American presence, historic mining and ranching operations, and scattered rural cabins that are relics of the Federal Small Tract Act.

SR 247 links tourist destinations including Joshua Tree National Park near the southern end, which sees nearly three million visitors a year. The highway's northern end stretches to historic U.S. Route 66. Travelers from Joshua Tree to Las Vegas access the I-15 north via Highway 247.

Visual Assessment Introduction

This Visual Assessment describes four discontiguous sections of SR 247 which meet Caltrans criteria for State Scenic Highway designation. We have organized the Visual Assessment in a northbound direction. Southbound views are also described throughout.

The four sections of highway are as follows:

PM 4-6.5 (2.5 mi.) Intrusion rate = 12.4%
PM 14-17 (3 mi.) Intrusion rate = 14.5%
PM 20-35 (15 mi.) Intrusion rate = 20.3%
PM 48.5-76 (27.5 mi) Intrusion rate = 23.9%

"PM" is an abbreviation for "postmile." A postmile is how California notes distance locations along highway routes. Postmile markers occur all along the highway at half-mile intervals.



Leaving the Town of Yucca Valley driving north, the Old Woman Springs Road section of SR 247 travels generally northward until about PM 10. The highway then goes generally northwest until about PM 20, where it takes a more westward path into the Desert Crossroads with SR 18 in Lucerne Valley (PM 45). There it makes its 90-degree turn, becoming the Barstow Road section of SR 247 and travels northward to the City of Barstow.

For the purpose of the Visual Assessment, the terms "northbound" or "southbound" are always used to describe the direction of travel, although the actual path of the highway varies. Every attempt has been made to use correct compass directions when labeling the view directions for each figure.

SR 247 travels through vast undeveloped regions of the Mojave Desert, offering a vividly memorable experience to the traveler. It also passes through areas of historical and current settlement and cultural use, many of which display unity with the natural landscape and visual harmony with the environment.

It is the intention of this document to discuss built elements within the context of an overwhelmingly scenic natural landscape. A desert landscape, by definition, has no forests that screen views. The power of the experience of traveling through the desert lies in its wide-open uninterrupted views that go on for many miles.

When visual intrusions are quantified within such a landscape, traditional methods of calculation can not be directly applied. A built element in the desert can be seen for many miles. Calculating rates of intrusion based on actual distance over which an element can be seen would quickly disqualify a desert landscape from Scenic designation.

Therefore, we have developed a rationale for quantifying intrusions, excluding rural residences which are more than one-half mile from the highway. We also limit the distance over which an intrusion is calculated in some circumstances. We describe these choices in the text of the Visual Assessment.

The photographs in this document were taken at different times of day over several seasons in different types of weather. They reflect the scenic variety the highway traveler experiences. Each trip through this region offers new impressions, new views, and new details, encouraging the traveler to return again and again.

The Figure Location Maps which accompany this document are designed to communicate the traveler's visual experience of Intrusions. Rather than mapping each and every built element, we have considered topography and relative densities to give a more accurate portrayal of the experience of traveling along SR 247.

The text, photos, and maps which follow are intended to work together to portray the visual experience the traveler will have along all the Scenic portions of SR 247.

VISUAL ASSESSMENT

Section 1: Old Woman Springs Road
PM 4 to PM 6.5 (Length: 2.5 miles)

Percentage of Visual Intrusions within Section 1: 12.4%
Minor Intrusions: Rural residences set away from the highway, mailboxes



Yucca Mesa & Lava Buttes



"PM" = Caltrans numbered Post Mile markers. SR 247 PM 0 stands at the intersection with SR 62 in Yucca Valley. PM 78 intersects Route 66/Interstate15 in Barstow.

Figure 4N - *Scenic View: Highway 247 heading north through stands of Joshua trees toward Pipes Canyon, as seen from PM 4 looking north. A minor butte lies ahead with the Bighorn Mountains in view beyond. Black Mesa slopes up to the left.*



Figure 4S - *Scenic View with Intrusions: Looking south from PM 4 a few scattered homes are seen within a landscape dominated by Joshua trees, Mojave Yucca, Creosote, and Cholla. Black Mesa slopes up to the right.*

Northbound SR 247 originates in the Town of Yucca Valley at the intersection of SR 62. Travelers leave the developed areas of Yucca Valley behind at PM 4, entering 2.5 miles of remarkably intact scenic beauty. As the highway bends to the northwest for the northbound traveler, vistas stretch across large stands of Joshua trees, for which nearby Joshua Tree National Park is named.

The highway dips into Pipes Canyon ahead, with views of lava-capped buttes in the Sand to Snow National Monument and the Bighorn Mountains beyond <<(Fig. 4N).

The southbound traveler approaching PM 4 will begin to see scattered homes fairly well screened by native vegetation occurring within the landscape beyond the end of this section. The intrusions are seen only momentarily and are classified as minor (Fig. 4S).

At PM 4.8, the traveler comes to where Aberdeen Road meets the highway. High on the slopes of Black Mesa to the west, lies a Land Art installation of two geoglyphs installed by Australian sculptor Andrew Rogers in 2008.

These artworks are visible from the air and from the ground if the SR 247 traveler knows where to look, but do not present themselves as a visual intrusion.



Figure 4.8W - *Scenic View: The artworks "Rhythms of Life" and "Atlatl" viewed from Aberdeen Road looking west toward Black Mesa. Cross traffic is on SR 247 (photo from atlasobscura.com).*

Some winters bring snow to the region (Fig. 4.88NW). A showy wildflower bloom will usually follow in the spring as the melting snow brings more moisture to the soil with less runoff.



Figure 4.88NW - *Scenic View: Looking northwest from PM 4.88 just north of Aberdeen Road, the highway dips down into Pipes Wash ahead with views of the snow-covered buttes beyond.*

At PM 5, the northbound traveler begins to descend dramatically into Pipes Wash. North of Pipes Wash and west of the highway are two broad, volcanic landforms that sit among other similar formations. Black Lava Butte and Flat Top Mesa were included as a detached section of the Sand to Snow National Monument, established in February 2016, in recognition of the iconic geologic formations and their ancient Serrano cultural sites. Vivid views of these buttes and others are enjoyed from many vantage points by travelers in both directions (Fig. 5.25NW, 5.5W, 5.75S).



Figure 5.25NW - *Scenic View: Looking northwest from PM 5.25 Highway 247 heads downhill toward the bottom of Pipes Wash. Seen beyond are the dark rocky slopes of Flat Top Mesa, part of the Sand to Snow National Monument.*

In the Pipes Wash area west of the highway (also known as Pipes Canyon), there are a few scattered homes in the distance. They are well screened by the Joshua tree forest and not easily visible to the driver. These homes are not classified as an intrusion (Figs. 5.5SW).

On the east side of the highway, there are a few homes overlooking Pipes Wash. Some of them are visible from the highway. They are widely dispersed and not close to the highway, and are classified as a minor intrusion for 1/4 mile (Fig. 5.5NE)>>



Figure 5.5SW - *Scenic View: The Joshua tree and Creosote-dominant landscape in Pipes Wash, as viewed from PM 5.5 looking southwest. Several homes along the base of Black Mesa (on the left) are barely visible to the driver. In the distance at the center right is Black Hill, and the flank of Flat Top Mesa is seen rising up on the right.*



Figure 5.5NE - *Scenic View with Intrusion: Looking northeast from PM 5.5, across the Joshua trees at the base of Pipes Wash. An occasional home such as this one is visible perched along the top edge of the wash.*

Coming up out of Pipes Wash heading north, the highway begins a dramatic "S" curve by making a sweeping turn to the right at about PM 5.75.

The northbound traveler continues to enjoy vistas of a largely intact landscape, driving through a dense stand of Joshua trees with uninterrupted views to the buttes and beyond. This is a vivid and memorable landscape (Figs. 6E, 6NW, 6SW, 6.5SW).>>



Figure 5.5W - *Scenic View: Looking west from PM 5.5, across the bottom of Pipes Wash. Flat Top Mesa is on the right. Also seen is the smaller Black Hill Butte in the center, the slopes of Black Mesa on the left, and San Gorgonio Mountain in the distance.*



Figure 5.75S - *Scenic View: Looking south across Pipes Wash to the slopes of Black Mesa on the right and the San Bernardino Mountains in Joshua Tree National Park beyond.*



Figure 6NW - *Scenic View: Looking northwest from PM 6, past a Joshua tree toward a smaller unnamed butte.*



Figure 6E - *Scenic View: Looking east at PM 6, through a Yucca and Joshua tree forest.*



Figure 6SW - *Scenic View: Looking southwest from PM 6 toward the spectacular Flat Top Mesa. Black Hill is seen to the left beyond.*

At about PM 6 the road straightens out for the northbound traveler before taking a big gentle bend to the left. Looking west, a few scattered houses may be visible in the saddle between the buttes over a half mile away. The traveler's eye will be on the beauty of the Joshua trees and the buttes. The homes in the distance are not classified as an intrusion (Fig. 6W).



Figure 6W - *Scenic View: Looking west from PM 6 a sparse collection of homes is barely visible between the buttes.*



Figure 6.5SW - *Scenic View: Looking southwest from PM 6.5 are views across the Joshua tree and Creosote-dominant landscape, to Flat Top Mesa at right and Black Mesa at left.*

The highway continues to curve left for the northbound traveler. It crosses La Brisa Drive at about PM 6.5 before straightening out to follow a north/south path into the unincorporated community of Flamingo Heights. At PM 6.5W, the northbound traveler will begin to see Flamingo Heights come into view. A rural residence and mailboxes are classified momentarily as a minor intrusion (Fig. 6.5W).



Figure 6.5W - *Scenic View with Intrusion: An unnamed smaller butte provides a backdrop to a rural residence with Flat Top Mesa beyond.*

VISUAL ASSESSMENT

"PM" = Caltrans numbered Post Mile markers. SR 247 PM 0 stands at the intersection with SR 62 in Yucca Valley. PM 78 intersects Route 66/Interstate15 in Barstow

Landers



Section 2:

Old Woman Springs Road
PM 14 to PM 17 (Length: 3 miles)
Percentage of Visual Intrusions within Section: 14.5%
Minor Intrusions:
Pipeline infrastructure, mailboxes, graffiti on rocks

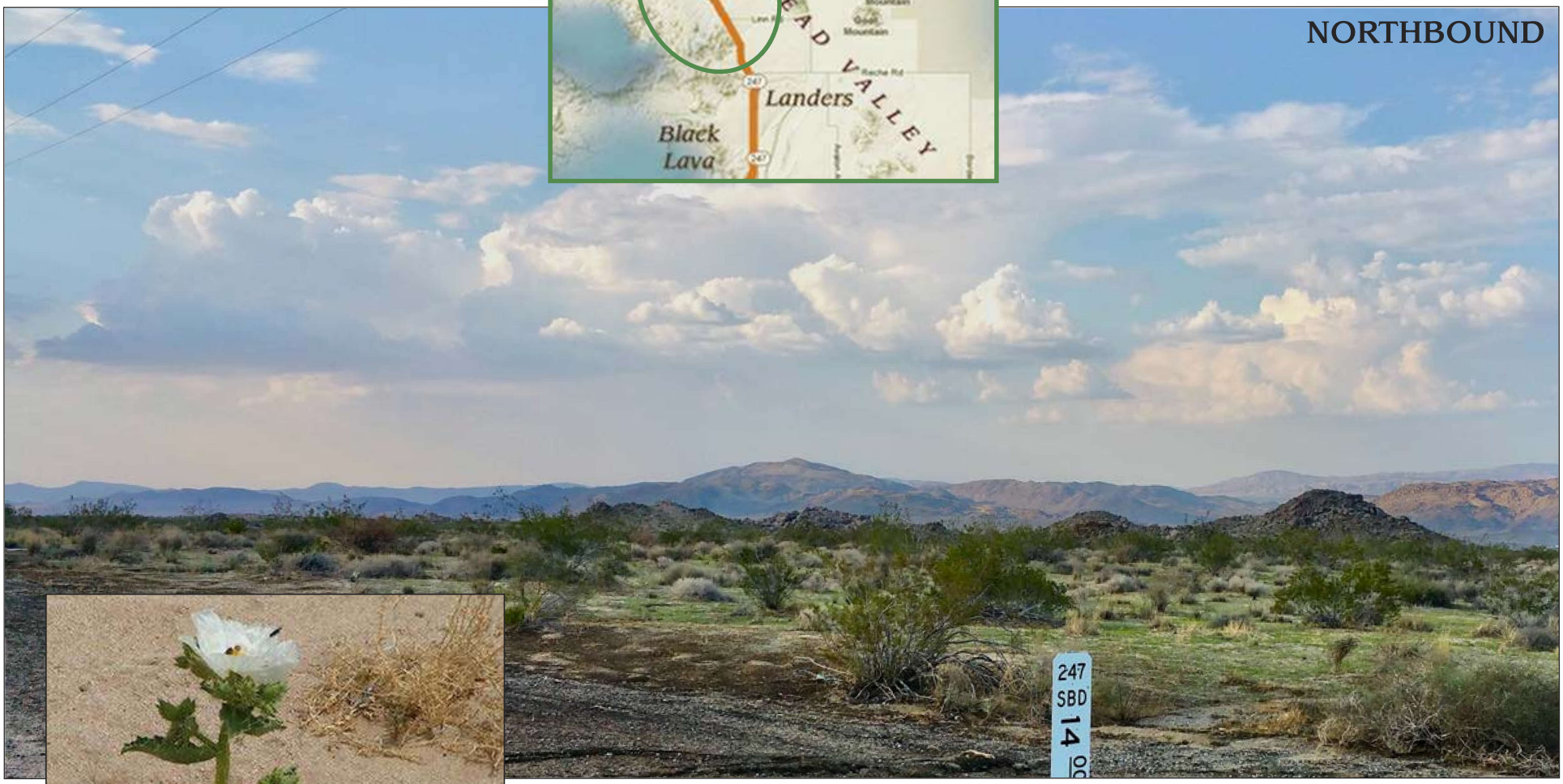


Figure 14NE - *Scenic View: Layered hills and mountain ranges seen beyond a pronounced valley from PM 14 looking northeast.*

Inset: A pollinator finds the first bloom on a lone Prickly Poppy.

Beyond PM 14, the northbound traveler is treated to vistas over a vast and intact scenic natural landscape as the highway passes through BLM land for nearly four miles.

The topography provides vivid layered views punctuated with rocky outcrops, sloping down on the east side of the highway over a great distance before rising up again to meet the varied textures of mountain ranges beyond.

On the west side of the highway the grade rises to meet rocky hills closer at hand. With a little rain, the Creosote bushes and associated plant communities become green seemingly overnight. Clouds provide dramatic light and shadows on the mountains in the distance. This is a vivid landscape, memorable for its vast scale and the distinctiveness of its vistas (Figs. 14NE, 14E, 14W).



Figure 14E - *Scenic View: Contrasting textures and colors, looking east from PM 14 past hills and landforms, across the shadowed valley of the Marine Corps Air Ground Combat Center (MCAGCC) to Hidalgo Mountain, seen at a distance of 13 miles.*
Inset: Fabled Spy Mountain



Figure 14W - *Scenic View: Looking west upslope from PM 14 across the Creosote landscape to the rocky hills nearby.*

Inset above: Erosion has left freestanding "rockpiles."
Insert at left: The washes and dense Quailbush and other shrubs shelter Gambel's quail families all over this region. Rockpiles give papa a lookout as mama and chicks forage.

Around PM 14 interesting boulder pile landforms begin to punctuate the otherwise smooth Creosote-dominant landscape. Looking northwest after passing PM 14 the northbound traveler sees an outcrop on the west side of the highway with an American flag planted at its peak (Fig.14.25NW).

Scenic views from the highway continue to be completely intact with few intrusions as the traveler passes PM 15 (Figs. 15E, 15W).



Figure 14.25NW - Scenic View: looking northwest at PM 14 toward the Ord Mountains, we see a rocky outcrop often topped with an American flag.



California Tickseed (Coreopsis) and Scale Bud.



Figure 15E - *Scenic View: Contrasting textures, colors and light, seen for miles across the varied landscape at PM 15 looking east. Spy Mountain is on the horizon at right.*



Figure 15W - *Scenic View: Looking west at PM 15 across the native landscape toward the Bighorn Mountains.*

Between PM 14.5 and PM 17 the traveler may notice vents for the Morongo Basin Pipeline occurring periodically along the west side of the highway. They are not large and block no views, but they do stand out momentarily in this virtually intact landscape. These vents are classified as a minor intrusion for a traveling distance of 1/8 mile overall (Fig. 15NE).



Figure 15NE - *Intrusion: Vents for the Morongo Basin Pipeline are seen periodically along the highway on the west side between PM 14.5 and PM 17*



At about PM 15.5 the highway begins to make a broad turn to the left for the northbound traveler, to follow a more westerly direction for the next 2.5 miles. At about PM 15.5 and again at about PM 16.5, distinctive sculptural rock piles occur very close to the highway. Because of their proximity to the highway, these rocks have become magnets for graffiti.

While unfortunate, these marks can also be seen as a cultural phenomenon occurring within an otherwise untouched natural scene. The surrounding landscape is completely intact, and the vandalism is limited to the boulders. These graffiti are classified as a minor intrusion (Figs.15.75NE, 16.5SE). >>>



Figure 15.75NE - *Scenic View with Intrusion: Graffiti on boulders and the great vista beyond, seen looking northeast from PM 15.75.*



Figure 16.5SE - *Scenic View with Intrusion: Graffiti on boulders as seen looking southeast at PM 16.5.*

Inset: View from PM 15.75W. A rare rain shower arches a rainbow over the highway.>>

Passing Bodick Road at about PM 16 the highway bends west for the northbound traveler to reveal strikingly vast views which open up to the north toward the hills near Means and Emerson Dry Lakes.

Dark rocky hills contrast with golden sandy slopes holding boulder groups eroded into fantastic shapes, creating vivid views toward the mountains beyond (Fig. 16N).





Figure 16N - *Scenic View: Looking north across sheets of blown sand and hills beyond, to the Lava Bed Mountains at a distance of 18 miles. Scattered residences seen in the distance are more than half a mile away.*

Looking generally east, scattered homes can be seen in the great distance. They are at a low elevation relative to the highway, and are not easily visible to the driver. None of these homes are within a half mile of the highway and they are not classified as an intrusion.

At the entry to Bodick Road is a row of mailboxes serving those rural homes. They are classified as a minor intrusion (Fig. 16SE).

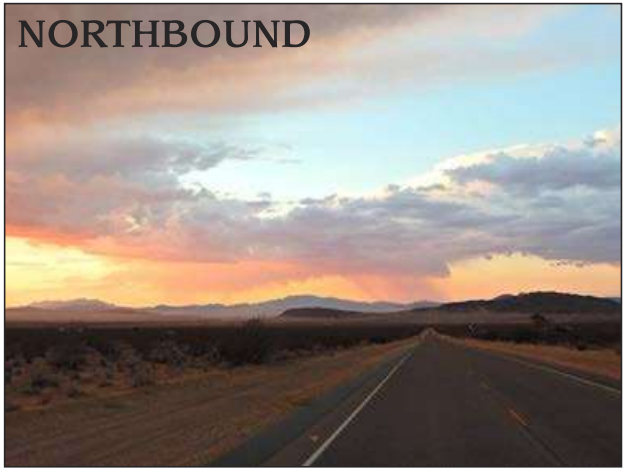
Wooden power poles continue to line the east side of the highway.





Figure 16SE - *Scenic View with Intrusion: Mailboxes at the entry to Bodick Road. Views are to Spy Mountain in the center, across the Marine Corps Air Ground Combat Center to the left and extending to the Bullion Mountains beyond at a distance of 34 miles.*

Inset above: Clusters of odd boulders intrigue the eye.
Inset at left: The highway heads northwest to unveil a vast desert landscape surrounded by mountains to the north and south.



Continuing north from PM 16 in a northwest direction, the traveler enjoys uninterrupted views on both sides of the highway. The depth and variation of these vistas are awe-inspiring, with multiple layered mountain ranges in view on a clear day. With the effects of ever-changing light and shadows, every trip through the region reveals details not taken in before (Figs.16.5NE, 17E).>>>



Figure 16.5NE - *Scenic View: PM 16.5 looking northeast toward the Johnson Valley OHV Area Hammers trails and Rodman Mountain on the left.*



Figure 17E - *Scenic View: PM 17 looking east, past the Argos and Hidalgo Mountains to the Bullion Mountains at a distance of 20 miles.*

VISUAL ASSESSMENT

Section 3:

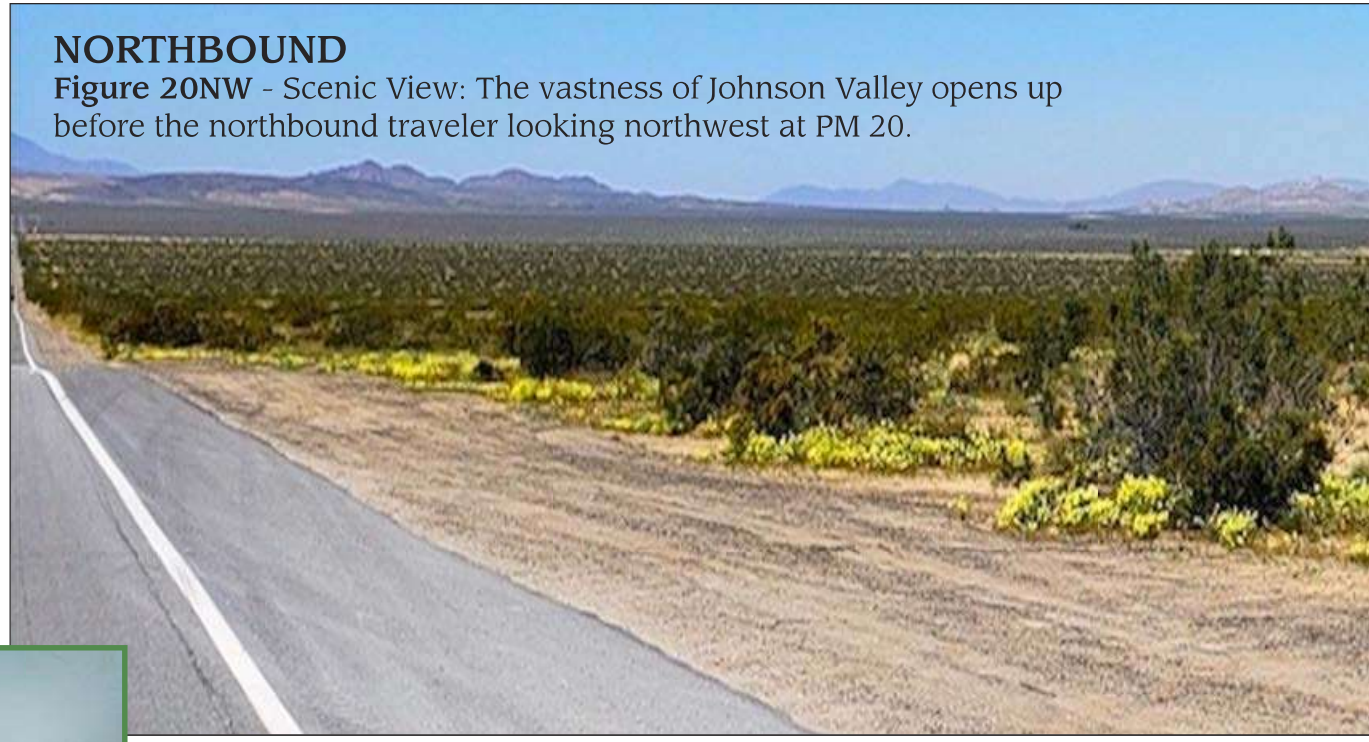
Old Woman Springs Road
PM 20 to PM 35 (Length: 15 miles)
Percentage of Visual Intrusions within Section 3: 20.3%

Minor Intrusions:
Rural residences set away from the highway, pipeline infrastructure, "water tank" cell tower, distant view of abandoned quarry, signage, transformer

Moderate Intrusions:
Rural residence close to highway, Old Woman Springs Ranch



"PM" = Caltrans numbered Post Mile markers. SR 247 PM 0 stands at the intersection with SR 62 in Yucca Valley. PM 78 intersects Route 66/Interstate15 in Barstow



NORTHBOUND
Figure 20NW - Scenic View: The vastness of Johnson Valley opens up before the northbound traveler looking northwest at PM 20.

Johnson Valley

The highway completes a sweeping left curve for the northbound traveler just after PM 20. Coming out of the curve, a breathtaking panoramic view of Johnson Valley opens up, almost uninterrupted by intrusions (Fig. 20NW).

The vividness of this intact Mojave Desert landscape leaves an immediate and lasting impression on the viewer. For the next six miles, the highway travels straight in an east-west direction.

The Bighorn Mountains form the southern edge of Johnson Valley (Fig. 20S). The landscape slopes gently downward from south to north, forming a vast open landscape with striking vistas twenty-five miles or more into the distance.

Seasonal cycles bring green to the leaves of the characteristic Creosote bush and associated plant communities, snow to the mountains, dramatic billowing clouds and spring wildflowers.

Morning and evening light and shadows fall dramatically across the varied Mojave landscape, hardly altered since the days of cowboys and homesteaders.



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Figure 20S - Scenic View: Johnson Valley in full spring bloom, looking south toward the Bighorn Mountains from PM 20.

Northern views stretch across the contrasting landscape textures of ancient sandy dry lakes and dark craggy hillsides (Fig. 20N).

Signage at Boone Road indicates the first entry point for northbound travelers to enter the Johnson Valley Off-Highway Vehicle Area, giving off-roaders access to the Means Dry Lake bed and the world-renowned Hammers trails.

The signage is classified as a minor intrusion (Fig. 20.25N).
Many of the unpaved roads leading away from the highway began as mining trails characteristic of the rural nature of the region and are not classified as intrusions.





Figure 20N - *Scenic View looking north from PM20 across basin and range formations. From left to right: sand dunes from Soggy Dry Lake; hills locally known as the Front Range; the entrance into Johnson Valley OHV Area with the sands of Means Dry Lake beyond; the Marine Corps Shared Use Area in the distance.*

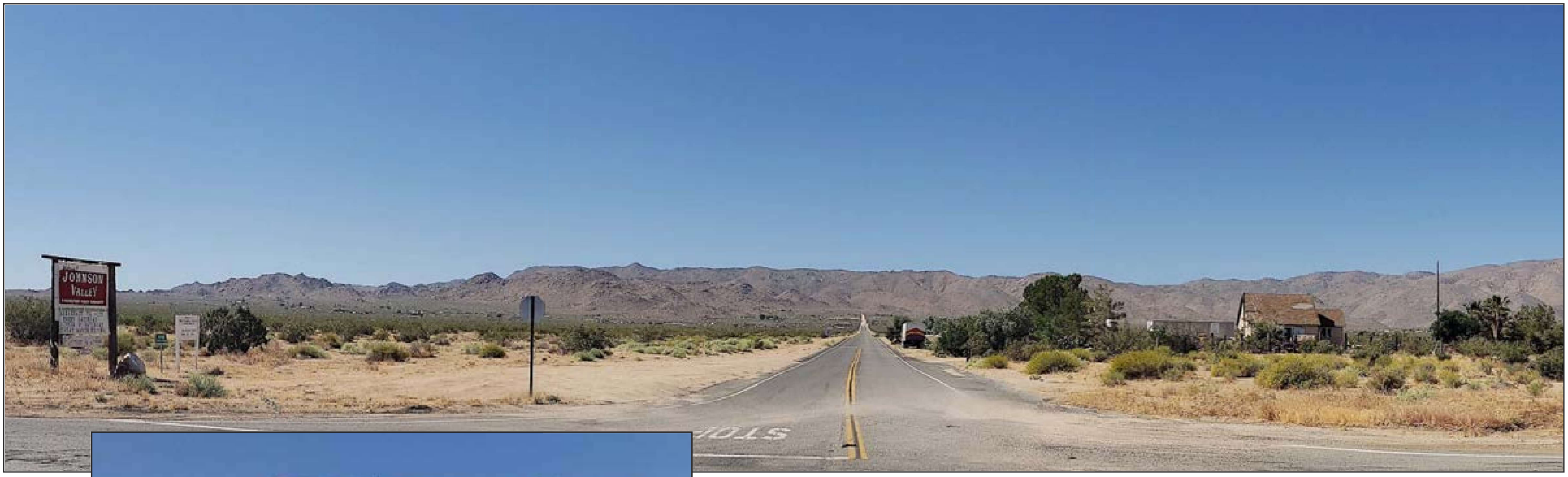
Figure 20.25N - *Scenic View with Intrusion: Signage opposite the turn onto unpaved Boone Rd. leading into the Johnson Valley OHV Area, Means Well at the edge of Means Dry Lake and the Hammers trails. The structures in view are almost a mile from the highway. View north from approximately PM 20.25*

At PM 21 the traveler comes to Larrea Road, which heads a mile upslope to the south before arriving in the sparsely populated Community Center area of Johnson Valley.

This hamlet of widely dispersed homes is visible at the base of the mountains when looking south from the highway. These homes are more than a mile from the highway, not classified as intrusions.

A single residence sits 100 yards up Larrea Road. It is well set back from the highway and partially screened. Views of the natural landscape dominate, and it is classified as a minor intrusion.

The Johnson Valley sign has advertised the community's Saturday Breakfast for decades and is classified as a minor intrusion (Fig. 21.1S).





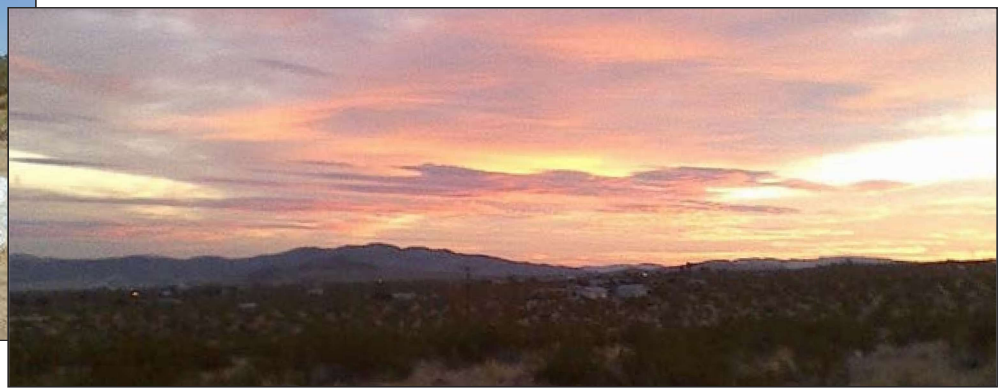


Figure 21.1S - *Intrusions: Signage and a single off-grid residence near the foot of Larrea Road, seen looking south from PM 21.1.*
Inset at left: Southbound view of Johnson Valley sign.
Inset below: Summer sunset silhouettes the Bighorn Mountains.



Figure 22E - Scenic View: Looking east from PM 22.0 toward Hartwell Hills and the Hammers trails area, with a view of Hidalgo Mountain sixteen miles in the distance.

Around PM 22 the southbound traveler will enjoy views east to the layered landforms of the Hartwell Hills and the Hammers trails area (Fig. 22E). Looking north and northwest, views open out to the dry lakes and sand dunes of Johnson Valley, extending to the Fry and Ord Mountains and beyond.

In the distance one can see a unique landmark, a line of trees growing on the dunes (Fig. 22N)



Figure 22N - Scenic View: Looking north from PM 22 to views of dry lakes, sand dunes with a line of trees and the Fry and Ord Mountains with a view of Rodman Mountain over twenty miles in the distance.



Figure 22.5NE - Scenic View with Intrusion: Isolated property within wide-open vista looking northeast from PM 22.5.

A collection of structures seen from PM 22.5 looking northeast is classified as a minor intrusion (PM 22.5NE).



Inset: Desert Dandelion



As the traveler passes through this region an occasional tiny cabin comes into view, sometimes alone and sometimes in small groups. These are homestead cabins, remnants of a period in history which helps define the character of the Morongo Basin region.

The communities of Yucca Mesa, Flamingo Heights, Landers and Johnson Valley together make up the unincorporated region known as the Homestead Valley, named in recognition of its beginnings. The tiny cabins were built on parcels up to 5 acres in size, deeded by the federal government under the Small Tract Act of 1938, which stayed in effect until 1976. Under federal guidelines, homesteaders were granted the land for a modest fee if they built a structure no smaller than 12 by 16 feet, -or 192 square feet. The program saw its greatest growth in the decade after the Second World War.

Some of the cabins were used for recreation and relaxation purposes, while others served as the starting point for permanent homes. 457,000 acres of BLM land was classified as "suitable for disposal" under this program. 70% of this land was in California and the majority was in San Bernardino County.

The land's remoteness was perhaps both its biggest appeal and biggest obstacle. Even today, much of the homesteaded area remains without water or electricity.

At PM 23 an old homestead cabin comes into view on the north side of the road. Homestead cabins are remnants of an important historical period and are a defining feature of the region. This one is classified as a minor intrusion (Fig. 23N).



Figure 23N: *Scenic View with Intrusion: A homestead cabin sits near the highway, seen looking north from PM 23.*





Inset: Young cholla cactus in the red grass going to seed that sometimes blankets the area after the winter rains.

Figure 23.5W - *Scenic View with Intrusion: View west toward PM 23.5 showing residence close to highway on the north side.*

About PM 23.5, the northbound traveler is descending slightly in elevation, passing the unpaved Bighorn Road, which heads uphill to the south. Power poles come down Bighorn Road and cross the highway. From this point west, they will line the north side of the highway for the next 7.5 miles. Wooden power poles along this rural highway are part of the landscape's historic composition, and are not classified as an intrusion.

At this point a residential compound with a collection of structures close to the highway comes into view. It is relatively large, light in color and not well integrated into the landscape. This home and its associated buildings are classified as a moderate intrusion (Fig. 23.5W). Looking south from PM 24, a distinctive geologic formation called Saddle Rock comes into view. It consists of two rocky mounds on the otherwise smooth sloping terrain, contrasting with the Bighorn Mountains beyond (Fig. 24S).

Looking south from PM 24, a distinctive geologic formation called Saddle Rock comes into view. It consists of two rocky mounds sitting on the otherwise flat sloping terrain, contrasting with the Bighorn Mountains beyond (Fig. 24S).



Figure 24S - *Scenic View: Saddle Rock mounds visible south of highway at PM 24.*



Figure 24.1S - *Intrusions: Looking south to the pump station and adjacent homes on Pony Road near PM 24.*

At PM 24.1 three windowless concrete block structures appear about a quarter mile south of the highway on Pony Rd. This fenced compound is the Johnson Valley Pump Station, boosting water flow along the Morongo Basin Pipeline from the California Aqueduct in Hesperia to the Town of Yucca Valley. The facility is neutral in color, but uncharacteristic for the area and not well screened. However, it was set far off the highway and the wide views of the natural landscape dominate. This facility is classified as a minor intrusion.

Additionally, there are several widely dispersed homes in this area on both sides of the highway, particularly to the south. They are rural in nature and do not detract from the viewer's impression of the natural beauty of the area. They are classified as minor intrusions (Fig. 24.1S).



Figure 25.3W - *Scenic View with Intrusion: Vents for the Morongo Basin Pipeline occur periodically along the west side of the* highway. *Scenic mountain views are uninterrupted.*

From PM 25.3 until the end of this section the northbound traveler may notice vents for the Morongo Basin Pipeline occurring periodically along the west side of the highway. They are not large and don't block any views, but they do stand out momentarily in the otherwise virtually intact landscape. These vents are classified as a minor intrusion for a traveling distance of 1/4 mile overall (Fig. 25.3W).



<<The gorge of Rattlesnake Canyon often funnels weather patterns coming from the south-facing side of the Bighorn Mountains. Rain and snow begin falling at higher altitudes in the Big Bear area, then move north out to the desert side. This makes an even more distinctive break in the colors on the mountains. Bighorn Peak marks the highest point.



Figure 25.8NE - *Scenic View with Intrusion: A solitary rural property near the highway looking southwest at about PM 25.8.*



Figure 26E - *Scenic View: The above rural property seen alone in the distance by the southbound traveler at PM 26 facing southwest.*

At about PM 25.7 a solitary residence with its collection of structures, vehicles and fencing sits close to the highway on the north side. The scenic natural landscape dominates the view and this is classified as a minor intrusion. Other than a few scattered residences in the great distance, this is the only intrusion within this vast viewshed (Figs. 25.8NE and 26E).





Desert Senna loves the sand washes draining the mountains.

Figure 26W - *Intrusion: A homestead cabin on the south side of the highway north of PM 26, with the Bighorn Mountains beyond.*



On the far right in the photo one can see the old county route, abandoned when the highway was realigned and paved in the mid-fifties.

Along with panoramic scenic views in every direction the northbound traveler looking southwest may notice a silver-gray area on the mountains below the year-round mountain resort of Big Bear. This is the old Partin Limestone Quarry, to be discussed at PM 32. An abandoned homestead cabin sits along the unpaved former county route which heads southeast off the highway just north of PM 26. The cabin is classified as a minor intrusion (Fig. 26W).

This is the last structure the northbound traveler will see for several miles.



Figure 27N - *Scenic View: Looking northeast from PM 27 across the great Creosote-dominated landscape of Johnson Valley, toward the Hartwell Hills and the entrance to Means Dry Lake, with Iron Ridge and Hidalgo Mountain beyond at distances of up to twenty miles.*



Figure 27S - *Scenic View: Bighorn Mountain and the mouth of Rattlesnake Canyon, looking south from PM 27.*

Soon the highway makes a sweeping right turn to travel the next 2.5 miles in a straight northwest/southeast direction. Continuing north, the traveler is immersed in a landscape nearly free from intrusions. The beauty of the Mojave Desert and all its distinctive features are intact here, to be taken in by the traveler through this scenic region.

The diverse natural features visible in the images on these pages and those that follow are described in their captions: (Figs. 27N, 27S, 28W, 29SE, 30N).



Rattlesnake Canyon

At about PM 26.5 unpaved Rattlesnake Canyon Road heads southwest toward the mountains into Rattlesnake Canyon. Much of the 27,000-acre Rattlesnake Canyon Grazing Allotment can be seen, one of the last two grazing allotments in the Western Mojave (Fig. 27S).

Creosote bush (Larrea tridentata)

is an evergreen flowering shrub which dominates the dry, low-lying regions of the Mojave Desert. Willowy narrow gray branches bear small resinous dark green leaves, yielding a distinctive creosote smell after a rain.

Creosote bush is the most drought-tolerant plant in North America. During prolonged dry periods it can shed its leaves and even its branches, surviving up to two years with no rain. With moisture it can appear lush and green, displaying small yellow flowers. >>>

Creosote plants are remarkable in their growth habit. They tend to display an evenly spaced distribution of plants over the landscape.

Their root systems are so efficient at absorbing water that fallen Creosote seeds cannot germinate nearby, creating a clear zone around each plant hosting shallow-rooted annuals which sprout when the rains come.

Each plant can live 100 to 200 years. As it ages, its root crown splits and forms the crowns of genetically identical plants around it. Over centuries, these clonal colonies grow in rings around the space that once held the parent plant.



About a mile north of Highway 247 exists the largest of these clonal rings, one of the oldest known living organisms on earth. Called "King Clone, this 55-foot-average diameter ring of identical Creosote bushes is estimated to be 11,700 years old. While the King Clone is not visible from the highway, knowledge of its existence and that of younger clones may allow the traveler through this region to understand the significance and unique value of this ubiquitous element of the Mojave Desert landscape.

The Soggy Dry Lake Creosote Ring ACEC (Area of Critical Environmental Concern) was designated to protect this Unusual Plant Assemblage.



Figure 29SE - *Scenic View: The view traveling southeast from PM 29 toward Bighorn Mountain which is visible for many miles.*

Inset: Fiddleneck and Desert Chicory appear in bouquets after winter rain and snowmelt.





Figure 28W - *Scenic View: Looking west from PM 28 toward the hills coming down to Old Woman Springs with the Granite Mountains at the far right side of the photograph, seen over twenty miles in the distance.*



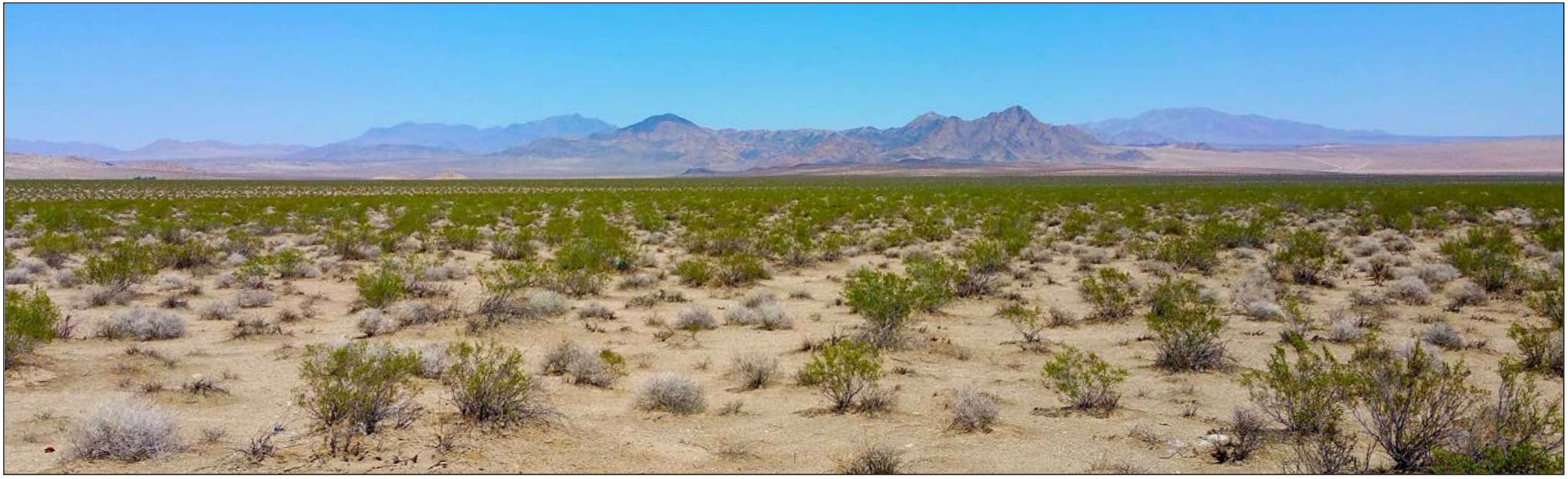


Figure 30N - *Scenic View: Looking north from PM 30, across Soggy Dry Lake to the Fry Mountains, with the Ord Mountains to the left at a distance of 17 miles, and Rodman Mountain to the right, at a distance of 20 miles.*

Old Woman Springs Ranch is classified as a moderate intrusion for 3/4 mile (Figs. 30S, 30W, 30.25SW, 31SE).



Figure 30S - *Scenic View with Intrusion: Looking south from PM 30*
Old Woman Springs Ranch is on the right with the Bighorn Mountains beyond.



Figure 30W - *Scenic View with Intrusion: Looking west from PM 30*
Old Woman Springs Ranch and its lava-capped hills are on the left.



Figure 30.25SW: *Scenic View with Intrusion: Old Woman Springs Ranch, as seen from PM 30.25 looking southwest.*

Old Woman Springs Ranch

For the northbound traveler, the highway has begun a curve to the left just before reaching PM 29, placing the historic Old Woman Springs Ranch in view on the south side of the road.

Both the Ranch and the stretch of SR 247 between Yucca Valley and Lucerne Valley are named for the abundant natural springs present here.

Old Woman Springs Ranch sits at the base of a line of low hills which come quite close to the highway. Much of this region south and west of the highway falls within the Old Woman Springs Wildlife Linkage ACEC (Area of Critical Environmental Concern). The area is critical for wildlife such as bighorn sheep and desert tortoise and for sensitive plant populations.

A few ranch structures sitting almost a half mile off the highway are cloaked in a remarkably lush grove of Cottonwood trees fed by the springs, in vivid contrast to the rest of the region. The historic charm of the ranch creates unity with the natural landscape.

Migrating waterfowl make the springs and reservoirs a regular destination. White wooden fencing runs along the boundary of the ranch at the highway.

A monument sits at the northern end of the ranch in a pullout off the highway in front of the original water source, now named Cottonwood Springs (Fig. 30.5S). It reads:

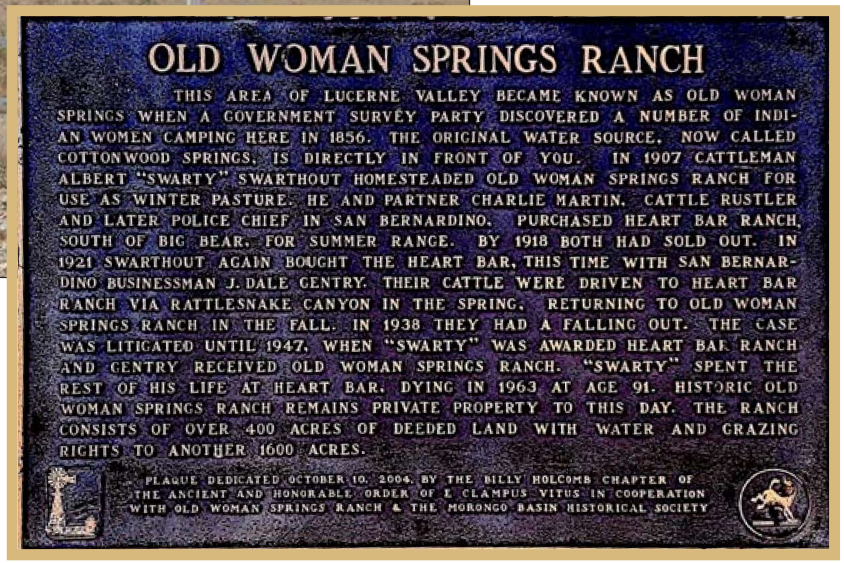




Figure 30.5S - *Monument at Cottonwood Springs, on the south side of the highway at PM 30.5.*



Figure 31SE - *Scenic View: The southbound traveler sees Old Woman Springs Ranch come into view to the southeast at PM 31. Beyond the low hills cradling the Ranch lie the Bighorn Mountains, seen at a distance of ten miles.*

<< Inset: The traveler can judge the seasonal changes in nighttime temperatures by the color changes on the Cottonwood trees around the ponds at Old Woman Springs Ranch..



PM 31.3W - Scenic View with Intrusion:
A transformer on the west side of the highway, seen from PM 31.3 looking west.

At PM 31.3, an electrical transformer stands near the highway to the west. This transformer is noticed only momentarily by the passing motorist and is classified as a minor intrusion (Fig. 31.3W).





Figure 31.5E: *Scenic View with Intrusion: Signage for the Johnson Valley OHV Area, as seen from PM 31.5 looking east.*
The distinctive profile of the rocky palisades of Bighorn Mountain acts as a landmark for the whole region.

At PM 31.5S, Bessemer Mine Road provides entry to the Johnson Valley Off-Highway Vehicle Area and Soggy Dry Lake to the east. The traveler can possibly meet vehicles of film crews as this landscape offers wild undeveloped vistas without power lines, paved roads or airplanes overhead.

Lucerne Valley





Insets: Green Rock Mine Road seen heading north from PM 31.85. The unusual vivid green color in the rock found in the Fry Mountains has made it widely popular for roofing and landscaping.



Figure 32W - *Scenic View with Intrusion: "Water tank" cell tower as viewed from PM 32 traveling north interrupting the sightline to the famous Cougar Buttes in the background.*

Nearing PM 32 a cellular transmission tower disguised to look like a very tall water storage tank comes into view for the northbound traveler looking northwest. While the rural motif of the cell tower design creates unity with its location, its size and placement have a high profile in the unobstructed viewshed. However the tower is set quite far off the highway and its utilitarian design and color allow it to appear somehow fitting to the unsuspecting passer-by.

For 1/4 mile the cell tower is classified as a minor intrusion (Fig. 32W).

From about PM 31.25, as the northbound traveler approaches Lucerne Valley looking southwest, an area of silver gray discoloration may become visible on the mountains below Big Bear. This is the old Partin Limestone Quarry, abandoned in the 1970's. There are currently no plans to restore the site.

Because of the treeless nature of the landscape, screening the quarry from view is not feasible. The grey patch can be seen from the highway, but does not dominate the landscape. It in no way obstructs scenic views in any direction. This historic quarry plays a role in understanding the region and its long history of mining. Many of the unpaved roads heading off the highway in this area have names which refer to this historic (and in some cases current) land use: Camp Rock Road, Bessemer Mine Road, Green Rock Mine Road, etc.

Foreground hills largely block views to the quarry for the highway traveler. The quarry is at a distance of six miles from the highway, and the otherwise nearly-intact scenic landscape dominates views in every direction for the traveler. The abandoned quarry thus has a diminished impact as an intrusion. The quarry is classified as a minor intrusion for a traveling distance of 3/4 mile (Fig. 32S).

Inset: A limestone stack marks the old road to the quarry.





Figure 32S - *Scenic View with Intrusion: View of the abandoned Partin Limestone Quarry as seen from PM 32 looking south. The pink layer at the top of the range on the right marks the scar left by the collapse of the mountain by the prehistoric Blackhawk Landslide.*

As the traveler proceeds north, views continue to be very scenic, with comparatively recent lava and cinder cones (Figs. 33N, 34N).



Figure 33N - *Scenic View: Sandy hills in the foreground rise gently above the valley, with Negro Butte visible on the far left, and the rugged Fry Mountains beyond on the right. The Ord Mountains are visible in the distance on the left and Rodman Mountain in the far distance on the right. These mountains are generally within the Ord-Rodman ACEC (Areas of Critical Environmental Concern), managed for Desert Tortoise conservation and recovery.*



Figure 34N - *Scenic View above: Looking north from PM 34 a sandy road leads to the rocky outcrop also visible in profile from SR 247 in both directions (Inset PM 32.5NW). On the left above are Negro Butte and Cougar Buttes with the Ord Mountains in the distance and Fry Mountains on the right.*



Figure 34A: *Aerial view of the Blackhawk Landslide. SR 247 crosses below the slide. Photo by Kerry Sieh*

Blackhawk Landslide

The deposit by one of the largest known landslides in North American prehistory comes into view for the northbound traveler close to the south side of the highway around PM 33.

This massive landslide occurred approximately 17,000 years ago. The tongue-shaped rocky deposit is two miles wide and five miles long, and from 30 to 100 feet thick.

The scale of this landform results from the way the landslide occurred. The event originated on Blackhawk Mountain, where a pink scar is still visible about 4,000 feet above. When the softer strata below the top of the mountain failed, a massive rocky sheet collapsed and slipped rapidly downslope. Then it hit a solid ridge and launched, intact, onto what became a cushion of compressed air which carried it at great speed to its resting position.

Silver prospectors first discovered the presence of fractured stone blocks which retain their original orientation to one another, like a jostled puzzle – characteristic of such an event.
(Figs. 33S, 34A, 34W, 35S, and 35E).



Figure 33S - *Scenic View: Land formations adjacent to the Blackhawk Landslide are in the foreground, as seen from PM 33 looking south. Bighorn Mountain is to the left, and Blackhawk Mountain with the pink scar left by the landslide is visible on the right.*



Figure 34W - *Scenic View: The Blackhawk Landslide is seen on the left, viewed by the northbound traveler looking west at PM 34. The Granite Mountains are seen straight ahead at a distance of eighteen miles. On the right is Cougar Buttes.*



Figure 35S - *Scenic View: The northern end of the Blackhawk Landslide viewed from PM 35 looking south. Sparse vegetation characterizes the ten square miles of slide debris.*



Figure 35E - *Scenic View: The toe of the Blackhawk Landslide as seen by the southbound traveler looking south at PM 35. At the center of the photograph is Bighorn Mountain, seen at a distance of thirteen miles.*

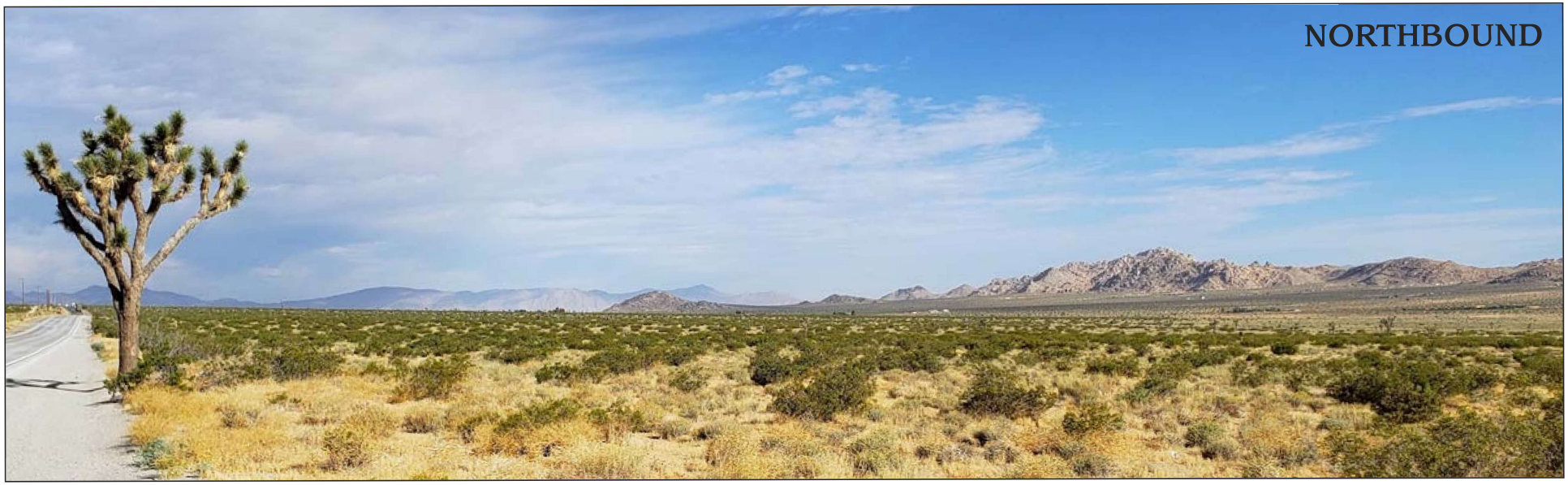


Figure 34.5NW - *Scenic View: Looking northwest, travelers see Joshua trees, both young and ancient, scattered within the stunning landscape approaching craggy Cougar Buttes, landscape star of many movies, commercials and videos and an off-roading favorite.*

VISUAL ASSESSMENT

Section 4: Barstow Road

PM 48.5 to PM 76 (Length: 27.5 miles)

Percentage of Visual Intrusions within Section: 23.9%



Minor Intrusions: Rural residences and structures, transmission lines at a distance, "water tank" cell tower, Peterman Hill reclaimed quarry, microwave relay station, gas line equipment, signage, distant freeway, distant city and town views.

Moderate Intrusions: Distant mining operations, rural residences and structures close to highway, Slash X Ranch, transmission lines at closer range, landfill.

Major Intrusions: Transmission lines seen at close range.

At approximately PM 48.5 the northbound traveler enters the heart of Lucerne Lake, a dry lake bed occupying the lowest point in the region at 2,851 ft. elevation (Figure 49N). This straight section of highway travels due north.

Lucerne Dry Lake



"PM" = Caltrans numbered Post Mile markers. SR 247 PM 0 stands at the intersection with SR 62 in Yucca Valley. PM 78 intersects Route 66/Interstate15

Lucerne Lake is approximately 3.7 miles by 5 miles in size at its widest point. It is classified as an Endorheic Basin or "closed sea" because it has no outflow to lower elevations. Undrained basins such as these which occur in the desert are also known as "playas."

They are characteristically flat, dry and free of vegetation. Although the dry lake bed may appear to be a featureless plain, playas in general reveal much about climate, past and present. Lucerne Lake last held permanent water at the end of the Pleistocene Epoch, approximately 11,000 years ago. Its beaches show evidence of prehistoric human occupation.

Today, Lucerne Lake may collect a bit of water for brief periods in rainy seasons, before drying out again.

Deep fissures can be observed across the surface of the dry lake bed. They are attributed to the drying out of sediments at depth, due to both ongoing climatic drying of the region and to overdraft of groundwater.

Lucerne Lake is surrounded by the Granite Mountains to the northwest, the Ord Mountains to the northeast, the town of Lucerne Valley and the Bighorn Mountains to the south, and Cougar Buttes and the Fry Mountains in the distance to the east (Figs. 49W, 49E, 49NE, 50NE).



Figure 49N - Scenic View: The northbound traveler passes through the Lucerne Dry Lake bed at PM 49, with the Granite Mountains to the east and the Ord Mountains. ahead and to the west.



Figure 49W - *Scenic View: Looking west across the dry lake bed toward the Granite Mountains, with clay and silt dunes.*



Figure 49E - *Scenic View: Looking east across Lucerne Dry Lake to the craggy Cougar Buttes at a distance of 7 miles, and to the Fry Mountains on the left at a distance of 14 miles. The Bighorn Mountains south of Johnson Valley can be seen on the right.*



Figure 49NE - *Scenic View: Looking northeast across the dry lake bed toward the Ord Mountains, 6 to 15 miles in the distance.*



Figure 50NE - *Scenic View: At PM 50 looking northeast, the traveler is at the edge of the lake bed looking toward the Ord Mountains.*

The unincorporated community of Lucerne Valley might begin to come into distant view for the southbound traveler at about PM 49, with the San Bernardino Mountains beyond. Three active mining operations exist on the north face of the mountain range above Lucerne Valley.

The mines are all regulated under the Surface Mining Control and Reclamation Act (SMCRA) and are slated for restoration to pre-mine conditions when they close. Two of them mine high-quality limestone which is a major component in dozens of everyday products. It is light in color, contrasting with the surrounding mountains. The third mines a material darker in color, and is less visible. The mines are at a distance of 8 to 12 miles from the southbound traveler viewing them from PM 49.

The treeless desert landscape doesn't offer screening of views to the mines. However, because of the great distance, the land use may not be recognizable to travelers from this vantage point. Scenic views in all directions allow the intrusive impact of the mines to recede so they do not dominate the desert panorama. While variation in color on the face of the mountain range may be discernible to the southbound traveler for a driving distance of about seven miles in this section, it isn't until about PM 49 that the land use is classified as an intrusion.

These historic mines are thus classified as a moderate intrusion over a distance of 1/2 mile. The following three images show views of the mines from three different vantage points along the highway (Figs. 49S, 51S, and 56S).



Figure 49S - *Scenic View with Intrusion: The mines on the San Bernardino Mountains above Lucerne Valley become discernible as intrusions at about PM 49 looking south.*



Figure 51S - *Scenic View: The mines on the face of the San Bernardino Mountains above Lucerne Valley, seen at a sufficient distance and with enough other features in the view as to be indiscernible to most visitors looking south from PM 51.*



Figure 56S - *Scenic View: The mines on the north face of the San Bernardino Mountains begin to come into view for the southbound traveler about PM 56, but because of their great distance and the scenic nature of the immediate landscape, they are not yet classified as an intrusion. The foothills of the Granite Mountains are seen near the west side of the highway.*

At PM 50.2, the traveler passes an abandoned radio broadcasting building on the east side of the highway. The single structure is not screened from view, but it is the only structure for miles and the natural landscape dominates. It is classified as a minor intrusion (Fig.50.2E).



Figure 50.2E - *Intrusion: An abandoned radio broadcasting building sits 400' off the highway at PM 50.2 looking east.*

At PM 51, the northbound traveler is at the northern limit of the dry lake. Clumps of Saltbush cover the flat terrain reaching east. Salt Cedar (Tamarisk) grows in spots along the highway. A collection of rural residences can be seen about a mile from the highway to the east of PM 51. They are not classified as an intrusion (Fig. 51E).

Depending on the light and weather, from approximately PM 50 for the northbound traveler transmission lines may be discernible running along the base of the mountains in the distance two miles to the west. For 1/2 mile traveling in either direction, the lines are classified as a minor intrusion (Figure 51.5W). >>>

At PM 52.2, the three rows of large SCE transmission lines cross the highway. For a stretch of approximately 1/4 mile approaching from either direction, the transmission towers and lines dominate the view and are classified as a major intrusion (Figure 52N). >>>



Figure 51E - *Scenic View: Looking East from PM 51 toward the Fry Mountains 10 to 15 miles in the distance.*



Figure 51.5W - *Scenic View with Intrusion: The scenic Granite Mountains, viewed from PM 51.5 looking west. Creosote bushes begin to populate the landscape. Transmission lines may be discernible running along the base of the mountains at a distance of two miles.*



Figure 52N - *Intrusion: The three parallel SCE transmission lines cross the highway just north of PM 52.*



Figure 53S - *Scenic View with Intrusion: Peterman Hill, viewed as Scenic by the southbound traveler from PM 53. The SCE transmission lines are visible here to the southbound traveler as they cross the highway ahead.*



Figure 51.8SE - *Intrusion: Peterman Hill reclaimed limestone quarry, as seen from PM 51.8 looking southeast.*

Once the traveler passes under the power lines, views are again unobstructed. South of PM 52, the highway bends to the left for the northbound traveler to follow a northwest/southeast direction, splitting from Haynes Rd. which continues north. The lower formation of the Granite Mountains (called White Horse Mountain on the USGS map) comes close to the highway here to the west.

Very close to the east side of the highway at PM 51.5 sits Peterman Hill, a limestone deposit which comes into view for the southbound traveler at PM 59. The scenic peaked shape of the hill appears prominently in the view of the approaching southbound traveler for about 7.5 miles, standing in relief within the vast mostly flat landscape around it. Only upon passing the hill can the traveler see evidence of past mining, with some white scarring which contrasts with the dark color of the rock. This former limestone quarry has been successfully recontoured and reclaimed, and is classified as a minor intrusion for 1/8 mile (Figs. 51.8SE, 53S).

North Lucerne Valley



Figure 53E - *Scenic View: Looking east from PM 53, the traveler views the jagged landforms of the Ord Mountains. Distant rural residences offer a sense of scale to the vast landscape. One home in this area is within a half mile of the highway, not pictured.*

Between PM 52 and PM 56.5, SR 247 travels in a northwest/southeast direction through a landscape gaining in elevation and increasingly dominated by Creosote bushes as one drives north.

At PM 54 the elevation of the highway reaches 3,000 feet and continues to gently climb, bending slightly further northward at PM 55.

The traveler along this stretch of highway is treated to views over the vast Mojave Desert landscape, with its variations in texture, color and light.

Within this remarkably scenic landscape exists a few areas of sparse rural residential development. Some of these residences can be seen in the distance, and are not classified as intrusions. A few of them occur within a half mile of the highway. They are widely dispersed, and the natural landscape dominates. These rural residences are classified as minor intrusions. Some include a number of outbuildings, collections of trailers, vehicles or other reflective objects and are classified as moderate intrusions. Overall, 1.5 miles of this stretch of highway are classified as intruded-upon.

Inset: During mating season the Desert Tortoise migrates toward the water in lakes that are dry for the rest of the year.

The images on pp.59-64, listed below, exemplify the types of built elements that exist along the scenic 4.5 mile stretch between PM 52 and PM 56.5:

Captions for each photo will describe and locate the Scenic View and/or Intrusion.(Figs. 53E, 53W, 53SE, 54E, 54W, 54.75NE, 55N, 55NE, 55SW, 55.5E, 56SE, and 56NW). >>>



Figure 53W - *Scenic View: The rocky slopes of White Horse Mountain, viewed from PM 53 looking west.*



Figure 53SE - *Scenic View: Looking southeast from PM 53, huge views stretch to the Fry Mountains, Cougar Buttes and the Bighorn Mountains, beyond distant rural residences.*

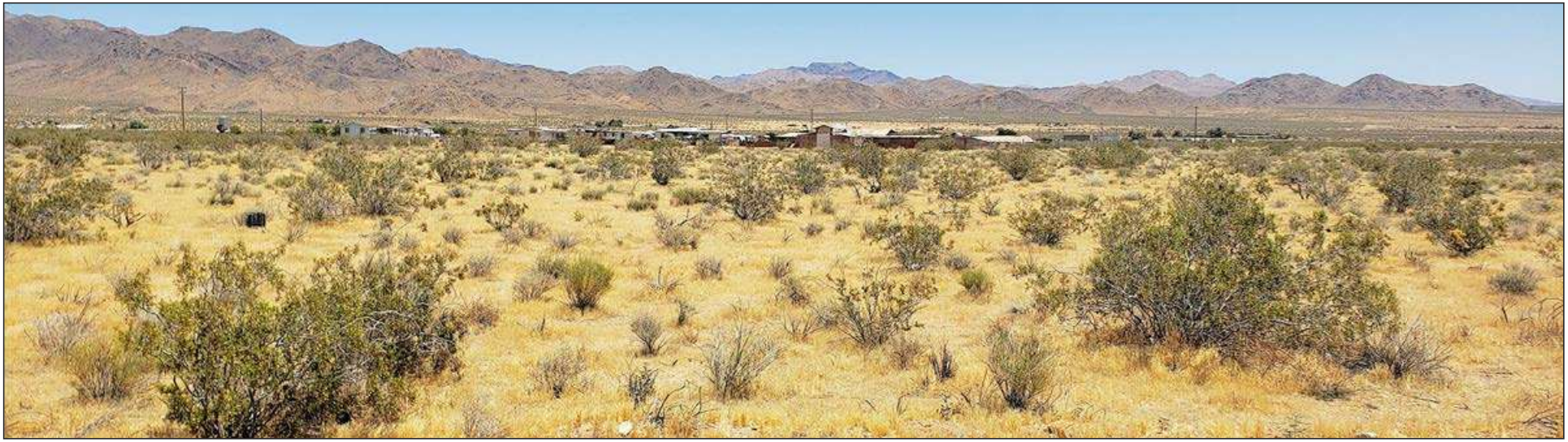


Figure 54E - *Intrusion: From PM 54 looking east, a collection of rural residences and vehicles with the beautiful Ord Mountains beyond.*

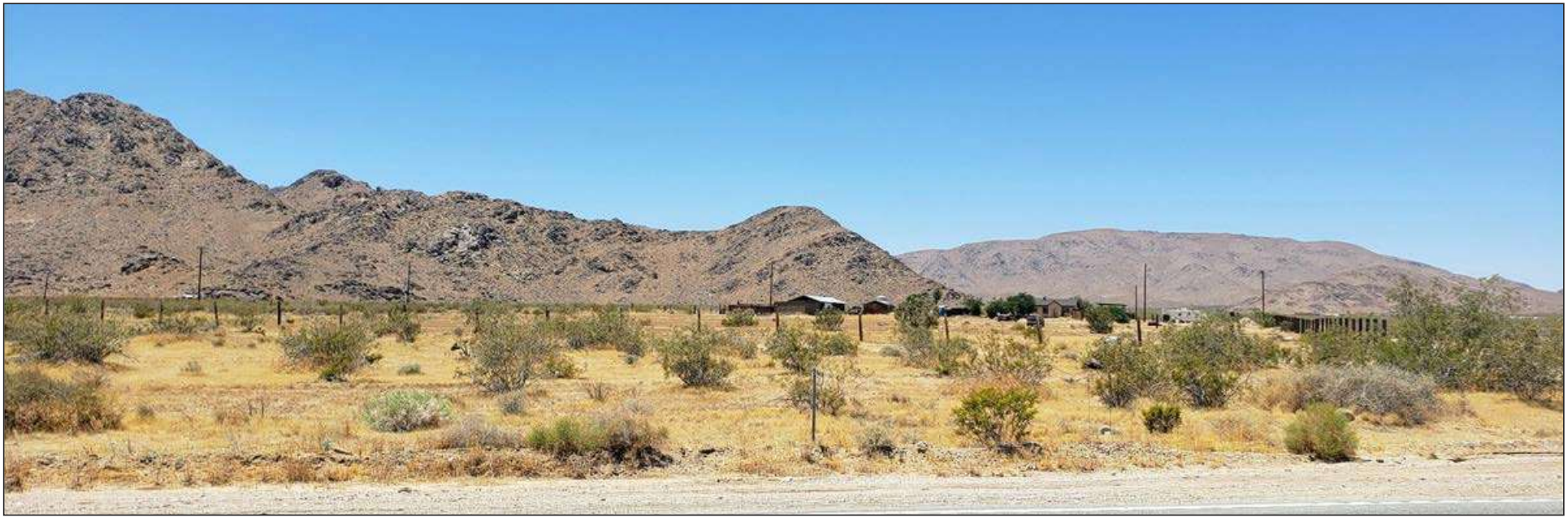


Figure 54W - *Intrusion: From PM 54 looking west, a rural residence with the Granite Mountains beyond.*



Figure 54.75NE - *Intrusion: At PM 54.75 looking northeast is a cell phone tower and structure disguised to look like an old water tank, creating unity with the region.*



Figure 55N - *Scenic View: At PM 55 the northbound traveler approaches the Sidewinder Mountains ahead, with the Sawtooths (also known as Stoddard Ridge) beyond and the Ord Mountains to the right. The highway makes a gentle bend just ahead to follow a nearly northward direction for the next mile and a half.*



Figure 55NE - *Scenic View: Stunning views across the Creosote-studded landscape looking northeast from PM 55, toward the craggy formations of the Ord Mountains. The small light-colored peaked landform remains in view over several miles.*



Figure 55SW - *Intrusions: Looking southwest from PM 55, a collection of rural residences is seen with the Granite Mountains beyond.*



Figure 55.5E - *Intrusion: The ruin of a stone foundation, part of a historic ranch site, is visible close to the east side of the highway at PM 55.5.*



Figure 56SE - *Scenic View with Intrusion: Looking southeast from PM 56, a rural residence with outbuildings sits within a half mile of the highway, in the shadow of the Ord Mountains.*

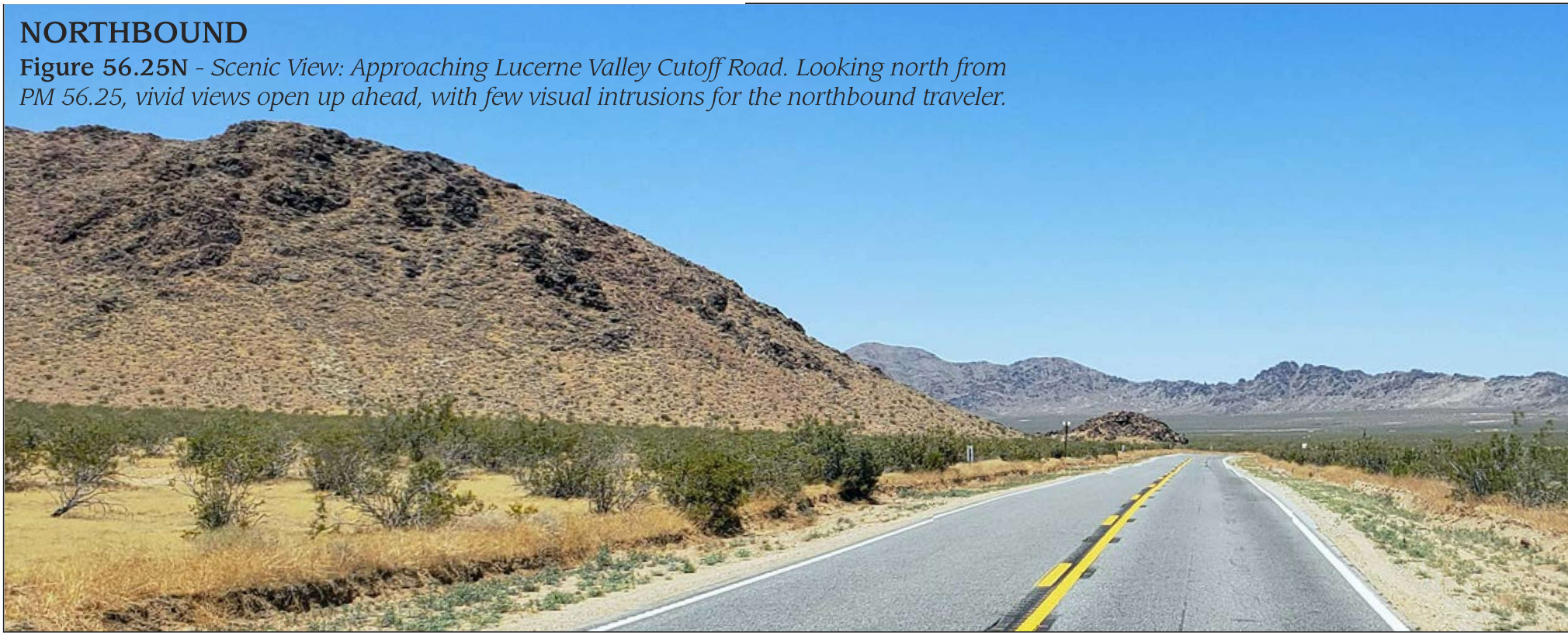


Figure 56.25N - *Scenic View: Approaching Lucerne Valley Cutoff Road. Looking north from PM 56.25, vivid views open up ahead, with few visual intrusions for the northbound traveler.*



Figure 56NW - *Scenic View with Intrusion: The red tile roof of the Vietnamese Catholic Saint Joseph Monastery can be seen momentarily in passing, nestled into the Sidewinder Mountains. Looking northwest from PM 56.*



At about PM 56.25 the highway begins to make a sweeping turn to the right for the northbound traveler, revealing a broad bowl-shaped basin to the west, ringed with mountains (Fig. 56.25N).

The natural scenic beauty of this region is almost completely intact as far as the eye can see in all directions. The traveler will enjoy vistas over the contrasting colors and textures of the vast Mojave Desert landscape. Black rocky outcrops contrast with sandy slopes. Mojave Yucca and Cholla increasingly appear within the Creosote-dominated landscape.

Continuing north from about PM 56.75, the highway begins to significantly gain elevation as it travels in a straight north-east/southwest direction for nearly three miles (Figs. 57NE, 57SW).

From about PM 57 traveling north, a few widely dispersed residences appear in the distance to the west, one-half to three miles from the highway. None are within a half mile of the highway, and they are not classified as intrusions (Figs. 57NW, 58SW, 58W, 59SW, 59S).>>>



Inset: Prickly Pear cactus



Figure 57NW - *Scenic View: Looking northwest into a valley ringed by the Stoddard Ridge and Stoddard Mountain. Several residences are barely visible in the great distance.*

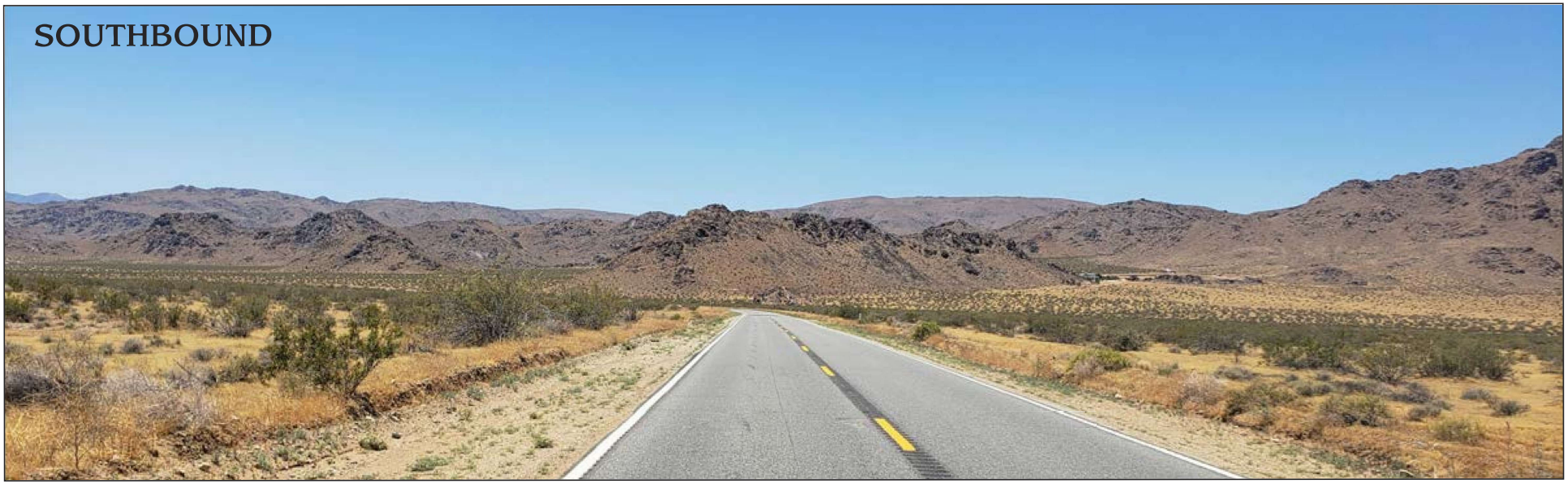


Figure 57SW - *Scenic View: Looking southwest to the Granite Mountains from PM 57. Saint Joseph Monastery is barely visible tucked behind the hill west of the highway.*



Figure 57NE - *Scenic View: Looking northeast from PM 57, the traveler is treated to vistas of the Ord Mountains up ahead to the east, and Stoddard Ridge (also known as the "Sawtooths") to the west.*



Figure 58SW - *Scenic View: Looking southwest toward Sidewinder Mountain from PM 58 over the vast open valley crossed by Lucerne Valley Cutoff.*



Figure 59SW - *Scenic View: Looking southwest toward the Sidewinder and Granite Mountains from PM 59. Wooden power poles approach and cross the highway then travel its flank to the north. The southbound traveler here is descending from a 3,500' elevation.*



Figure 59S - *Scenic View: Looking southeast from PM 59 with the foothills of the Ord Mountains in the foreground to the east, past the Granite Mountains and Peterman Hill in the mid-ground, then over Lucerne Dry Lake to the San Bernardino Mountains beyond.*

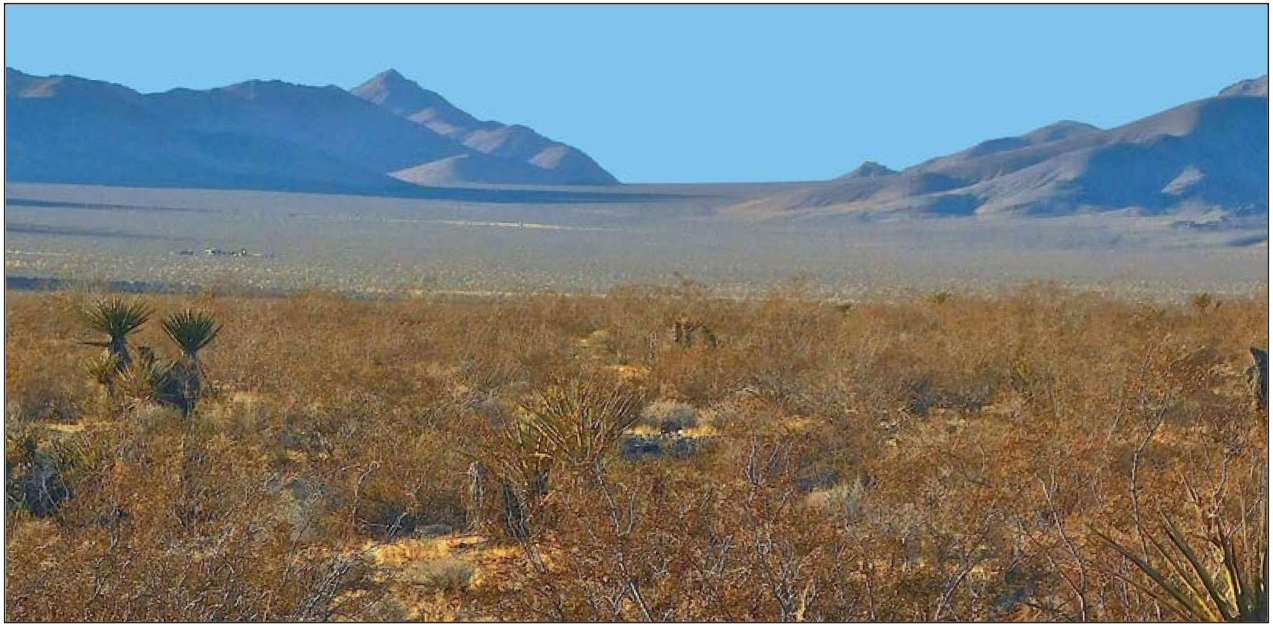


Figure 58W - *Scenic View: The beautiful wide valley traversed by Lucerne Valley Cutoff Road comes into prominence as the northbound traveler approaches Goat Pass. Zoom view from PM 58, looking west to the pass leading to historic Stoddard Wells Road.*



The northbound traveler is still climbing in elevation, seeing increasing numbers of Mojave Yucca and smaller and fewer Creosotes. The soil is more red in color and vegetation in general is smaller and more sparse, taking on the appearance of polka dots on the hillsides (Fig. 60E).

Inset: Mojave Yucca in full bloom.



Figure 60E - *Scenic View: Looking east toward the Ord Mountains from PM 60. As the road ascends into Goat Pass, travelers see increasingly dense stands of Mojave Yucca among the Creosote, and smooth contours with oddly-shaped outcrops.*

Goat Pass

At about PM 59.75, the highway begins to make a long snaking bend to the left, between the jagged rocks of Stoddard Ridge (also known as the Sawtooths) to the west, and West Ord Mountain to the east. The mountains come quite close to the highway on this stretch of the road known as Goat Pass (Fig. 61E).

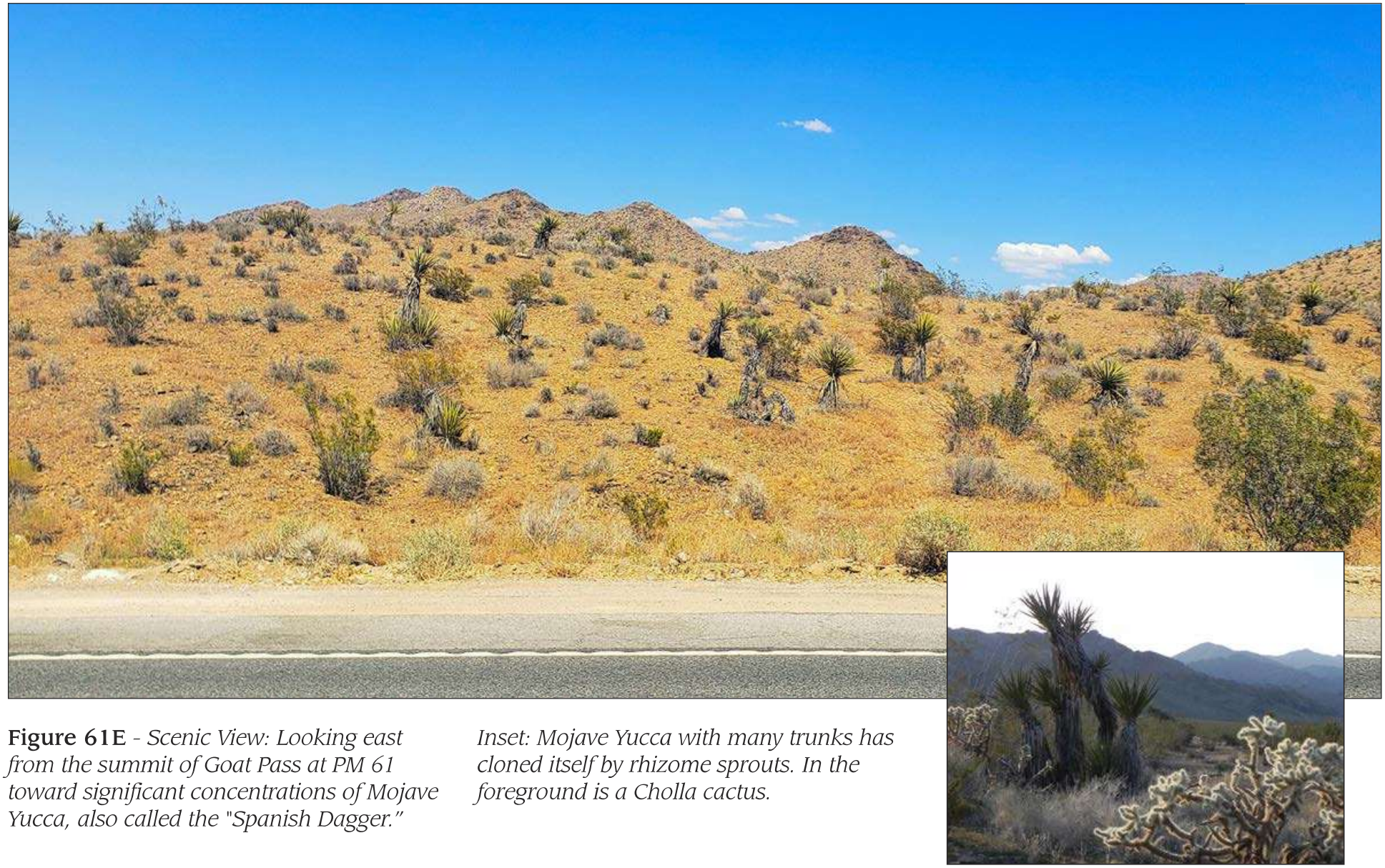
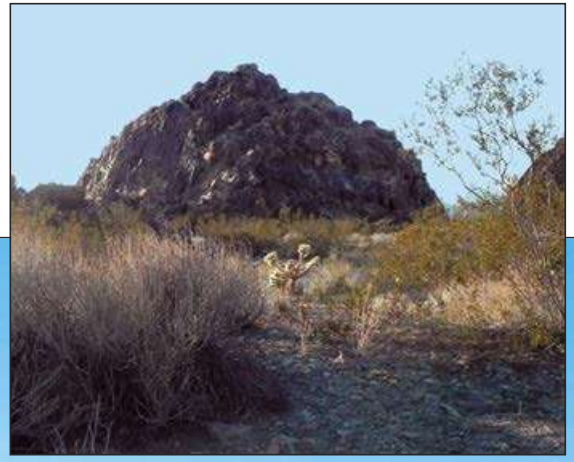


Figure 61E - *Scenic View: Looking east from the summit of Goat Pass at PM 61 toward significant concentrations of Mojave Yucca, also called the "Spanish Dagger."*

Inset: Mojave Yucca with many trunks has cloned itself by rhizome sprouts. In the foreground is a Cholla cactus.



Inset: Approximately PM 59.25 "Gumdrop" extrusions at the southern exit from Goat Pass show the traveler some of the wide variety of formations in the unique Stoddard Ridge. These result from over a million years of shearing, folding, faulting, intrusion and metamorphism, followed by volcanic intrusions and deformation. The infinite number of seams, cracks and crevices hosts desert plants of many types (Fig.60.5SE).



Figure 60.5SE - *Scenic View: The southbound traveler descending Goat Pass at PM 60.5 approaches the exit into North Lucerne Valley, passing Stoddard Ridge (Sawtooth Mountains) on the right with West Ord Mountain in view on the left.*

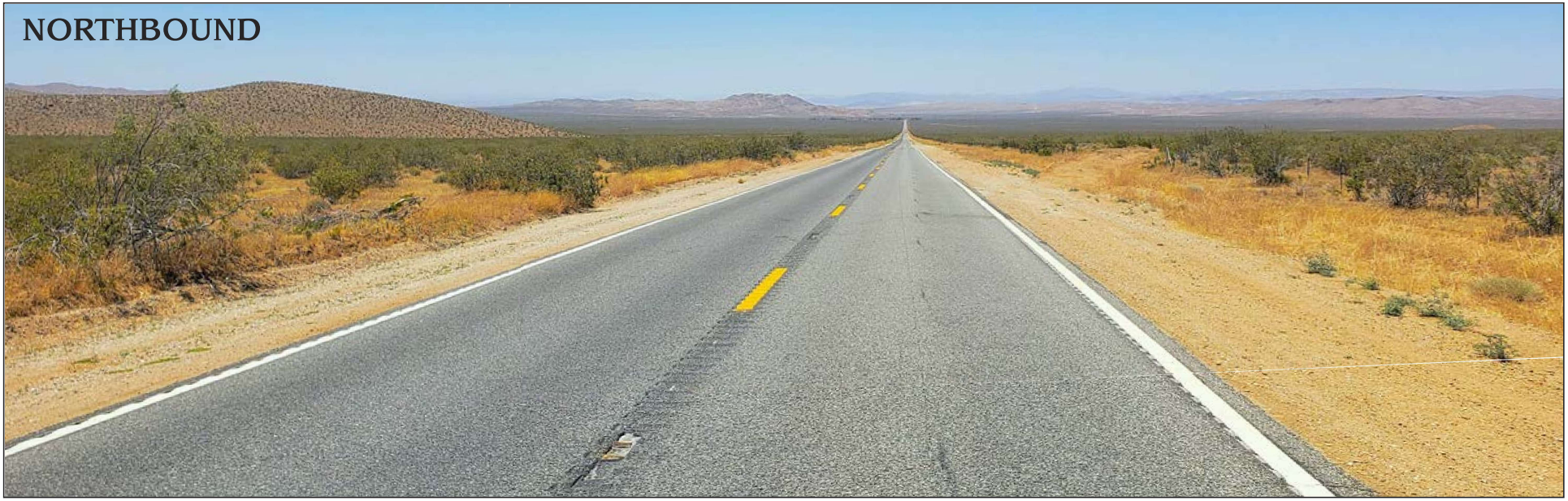


Figure 61N - *Scenic View: Looking north from the summit of Goat Pass at PM 61 (elevation 4,148 ft.), down into the vast Stoddard Valley.*

Just before PM 61, the northbound traveler reaches the summit of Goat Pass at elevation 4,148. Views to the north from here are breathtaking as the traveler gazes down to the Stoddard Valley below, past sandy landforms in the foreground which are largely devoid of vegetation (Fig. 61N).

Looking south from PM 62, the traveler looks up toward Goat Pass and the highway bending right before its dramatic descent into Lucerne Valley (Fig. 62S).



Figure 62S - *Scenic View: Looking south from PM 62 toward the summit of Goat Pass.*

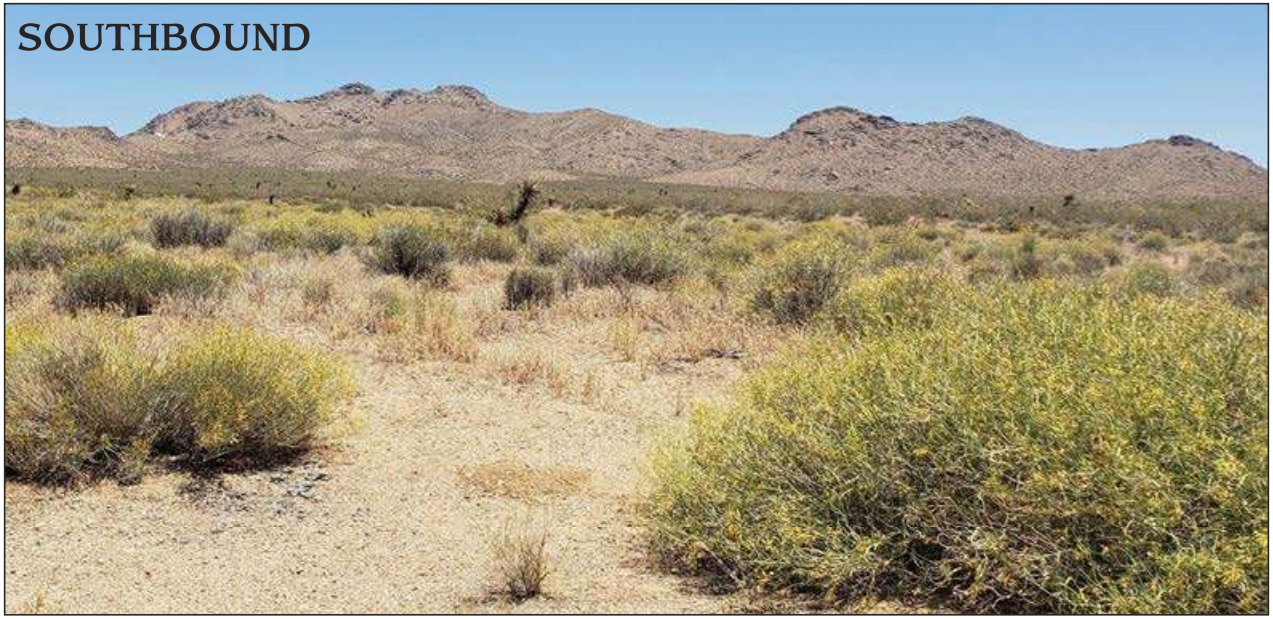


Figure 62SE - *Scenic View with Intrusion: Looking southeast from PM 62 toward Goat Mountain. The Cline Microwave Relay Station is barely visible in this photo - a small light colored spot on the hills to the left.*

At around PM 62, the traveler may briefly see the Cline Microwave Relay Station up on Goat Mountain to the east, about a mile and a half from the highway. While distant, it can at times appear reflective. It does not dominate the landscape and is classified momentarily as a minor intrusion (Fig. 62SE).

At about PM 62.25, a collection of residential structures and outbuildings appears about 1/4 mile to the west. They are light in color, contrasting with the otherwise open landscape, so they catch the traveler's eye.

Views of the natural landscape dominate however, and this is classified as a minor intrusion (PM 62.25NW).

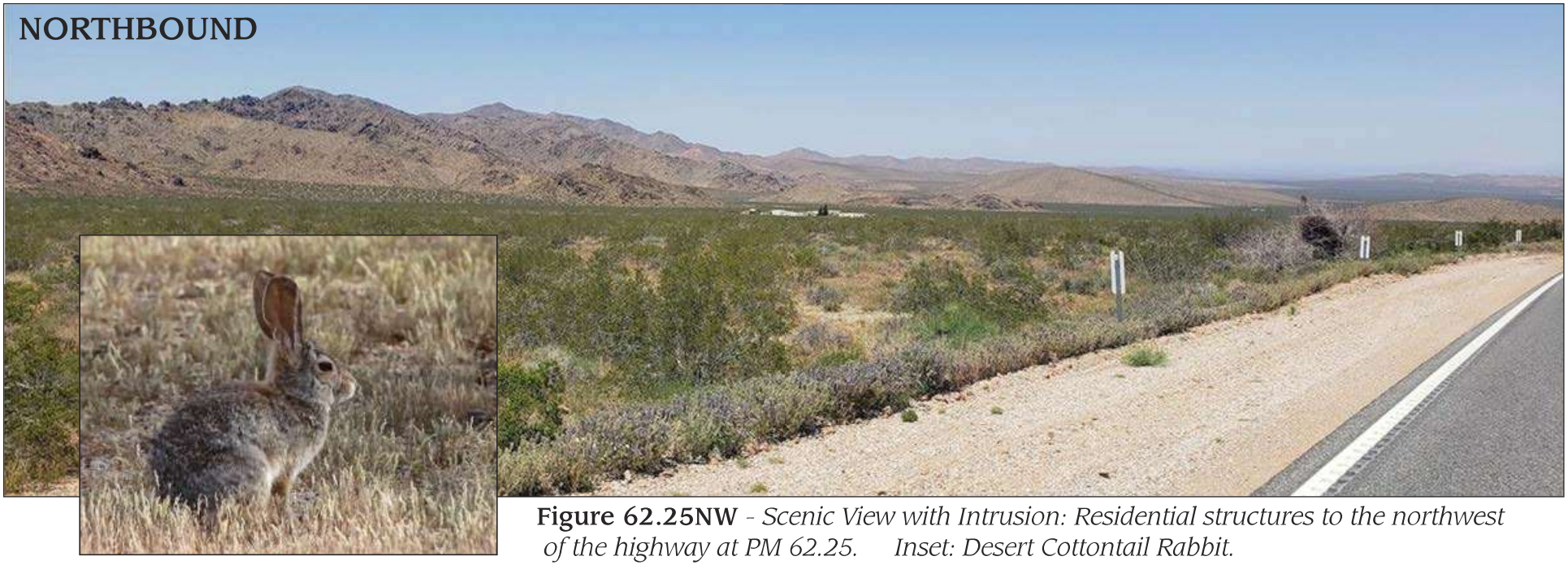


Figure 62.25NW - *Scenic View with Intrusion: Residential structures to the northwest of the highway at PM 62.25. Inset: Desert Cottontail Rabbit.*

Traveling north from about PM 62.25, the highway straightens out to follow a straight path northwest/southeast for the next 6.5 miles as it descends into the Stoddard Valley. This is an area of striking scenic beauty with few intrusions.

Here the traveler will enjoy the vivid experience of traveling through an iconic Mojave Desert landscape. Many car commercials have been shot along this scenic stretch of highway, capitalizing on the distinctive feeling of traveling a seemingly endless straight open road through the American West.

Contrasting landforms punctuate the otherwise flat sloping terrain, which is covered largely with Creosote (Fig. 63N).



Figure 63N - *Scenic View: Looking north from PM 63. The northbound traveler gazes down over a 900' grade-change and 6.5 miles of perfectly straight highway.*

Inset: Creosote seeds ready to fly.

To the east, a BLM kiosk stands about fifty yards off the highway. Signage describes the Ord Mountain Route Network. It occupies much of the public land here, linking the Stoddard Valley and Johnson Valley Off-Highway Vehicle Areas, also known as Open Areas. It states Off-Highway Vehicle Recreation Area regulations, and displays an OHV route map. Signage reminds visitors to enjoy public lands responsibly by staying on designated "open" routes and that this area is also important to wildlife, including the federally-protected and endangered Desert Tortoise.

The kiosk is classified as a minor intrusion (Fig. 63SE).

Following the gas line road past the kiosk about a mile leads to a developed picnic area and restrooms.



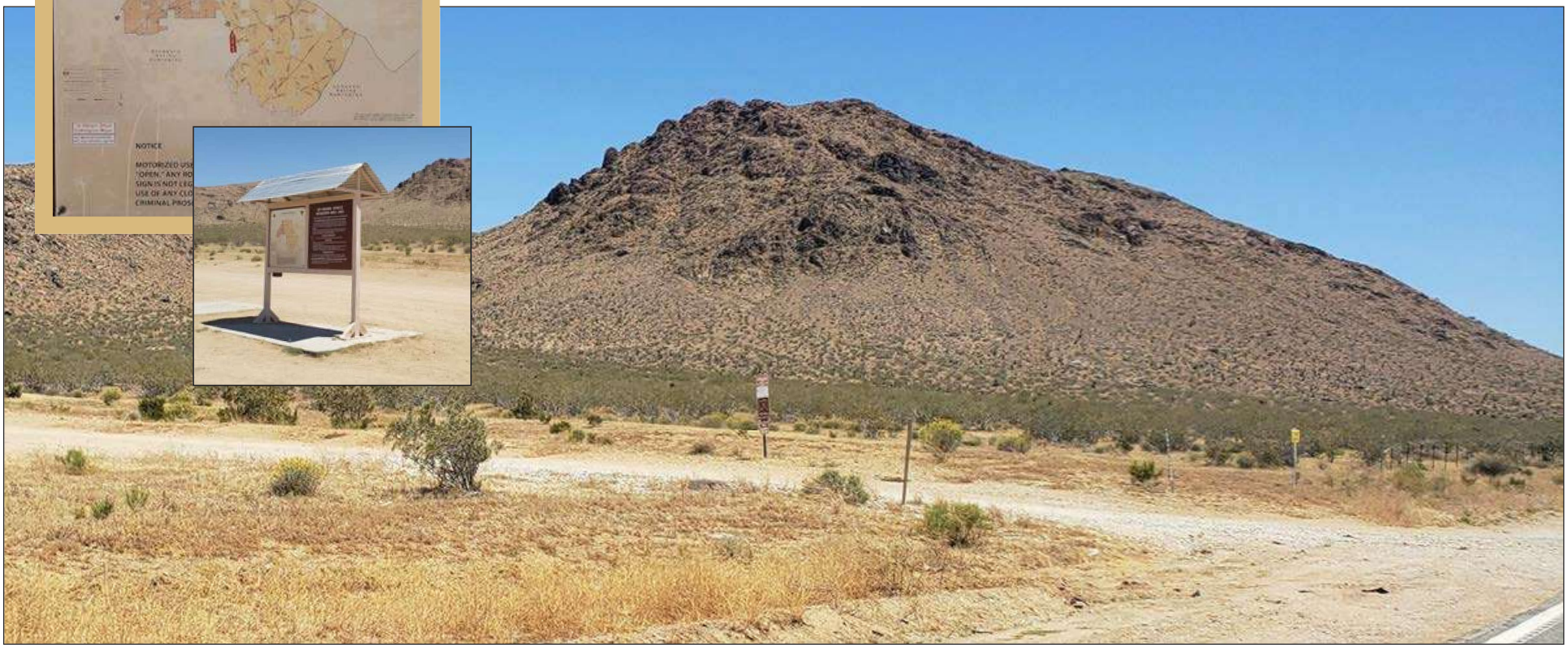


Figure 63SE - *Intrusion: A BLM kiosk is visible just left of this photo (see inset) viewing southeast from PM 63.*









To the west at PM 63, the traveler may briefly see a stand of equipment surrounded by a chain link fence, about 100 yards off the highway (Fig. 63W). This marks the natural gas pipeline that traverses the area and is classified as a minor intrusion.

The gas line road leads into Sawtooth Canyon in the Stoddard Ridge, a popular destination known for historic relics dating from the heyday of Slash X Ranch, challenging sport climbing on fantastic pinnacles and domes in New Jack City, caves, springs and Sawtooth Canyon Campground.

Insets: Bizarre rock formations in the Sawtooth Mountains harbor Mormon Tea, Barrel Cactus and other succulents as well as many high desert annuals.

Figure 63W - *Intrusions: Equipment related to gas lines which traverse the area, and BLM signage for the road to Sawtooth Canyon Campground are visible to the west from PM 63.*

Along this stretch of highway, the traveler enjoys views of varied and contrasting landforms, from soft sandy colored slopes to black rugged rocky hills, to a parade of small peaks (Figs. 63NW, 64E).

Inset: Indigo bush blooms prominently here.





Figure 63NW - *Scenic View: Looking northwest from PM 63 toward Stoddard Ridge.*



Figure 64E - *Scenic View: Looking east from PM 64.*

Passing PM 64.5 the northbound traveler has descended to elevation 3,305, and is still descending. Views in this region stretch to hills and mountains, rising in all directions beyond the vast, sloping level landscape. Dark rocky hills sit behind sandy slopes dotted with Creosote, vivid contrasts in color and texture. There are almost no built intrusions in sight (Fig. 64NW).

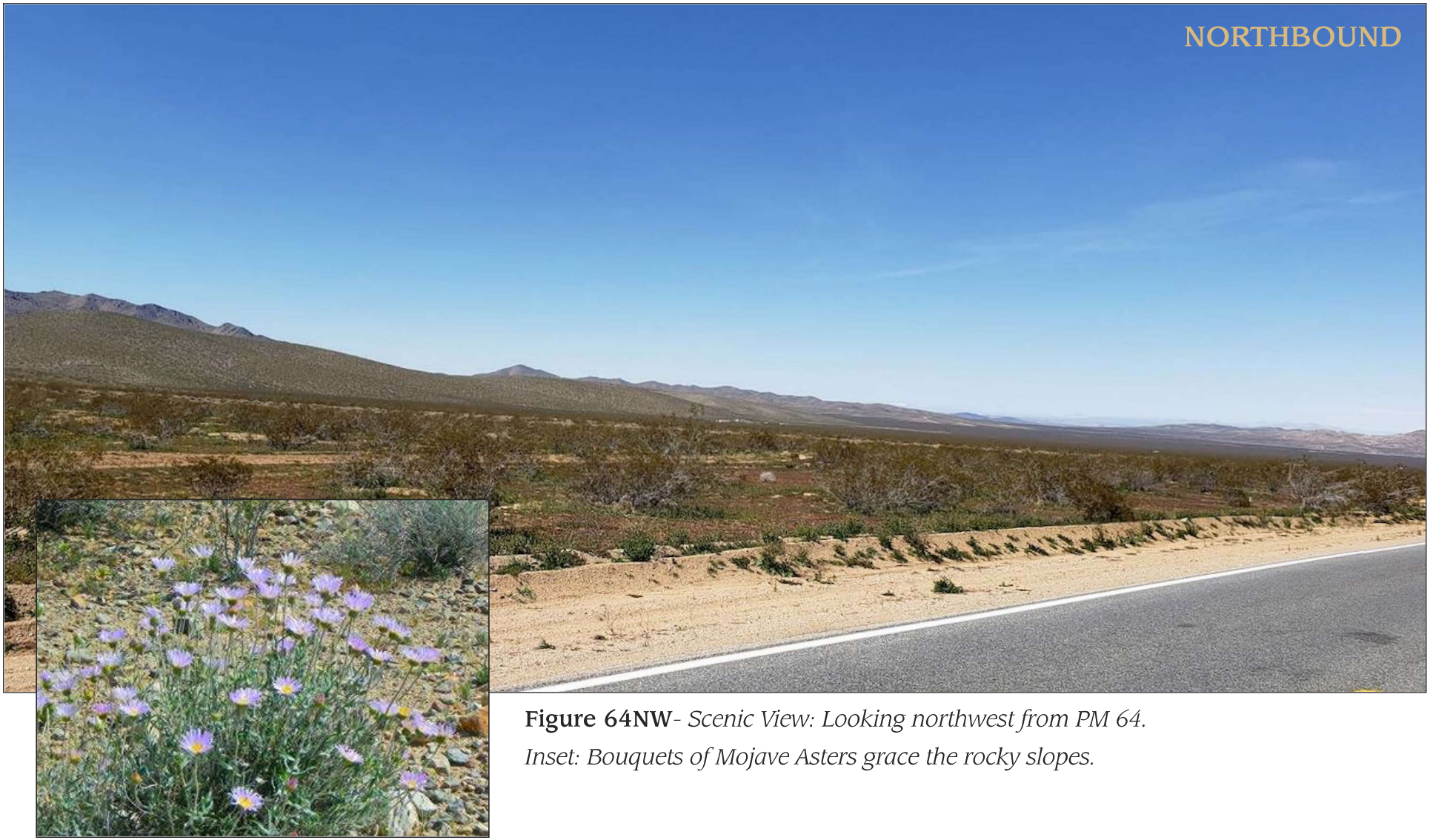


Figure 64NW- *Scenic View: Looking northwest from PM 64. Inset: Bouquets of Mojave Asters grace the rocky slopes.*



Figure 65SW - *Scenic View: Looking southwest from PM 65 to the contrasting colors and textures of what appear to be long-stabilized dunes in front of the Sawtooth Mountains region of Stoddard Ridge.*

Inset: The geologic complexity of this region combined unlikely materials that result in the unique Stoddard Ridge, so inviting for sport rockclimbing.



From PM 65 to 65.5 only a few barely visible structures sit in the distance to the west of SR 247. They are light in color which allows them to be seen.

These are over a half mile from the road and are not classified as intrusions (Fig. 65W).

Inset: Echinocactus polycephalus, the Many-headed Barrel Cactus, grows in spreading clumps as it ages. Restricted to the driest parts of the desert, it survives and thrives here on the rocky slopes in the Stoddard Valley environs.

Figure 65W - *Scenic View: Looking west from PM 65 toward sandy slopes spotted with Creosote and the dragon's-back profile of Stoddard Ridge.*

Intact scenic views continue for the northbound traveler over the next few miles (Figs. 66S, 66NW, 67N, 67E, 67SW).



Figure 66S - *Scenic View: The southbound traveler enjoys the perfectly straight gently rising highway heading into the Ord Mountains and Goat Pass looking south from PM 66.*



Figure 66NW - *Scenic View: Looking northwest on a clear winter day, the snowy peaks of the southern Sierra Nevada Mountains can be seen from this stretch at a distance of about 80 miles. A shadowy view is discernible here, on the horizon at center of the photo.*



Figure 67N - *Scenic View: As the road continues its straight descent, Slash X Ranch begins to come into view looking north from PM 67, with the silhouette of the Mitchel Range in the distance beyond Barstow.*



Figure 67E - *Scenic View : Looking east from PM 67 across a very flat Creosote-dominant landscape toward Daggett Ridge.*



Figure 67SW - *Scenic View: Looking southwest from PM 67 to the wide vista of contrasting textures and colors, with the rocky Stoddard Ridge beyond.*



Figure 68SW - *Scenic View: Looking southwest from PM 68, views toward Stoddard Ridge continue to be scenic*

At PM 68.75 four parallel LADWP transmission lines cross the highway. For a traveling distance of 3/4 mile in either direction, the transmission lines are classified as a minor intrusion (Fig. 68N).

For the last 1/4 mile approaching the power lines from either direction, they overwhelm views of the natural landscape and are classified as a major intrusion (Fig. 68.75W).>>

<<Views in other directions are intact and extremely scenic (Figs. 68SW, 68SE).



Figure 68SE - *Scenic View: The southbound traveler enjoys uninterrupted views across Stoddard Valley southeast from PM 68 toward Goat Mountain and the Ord Mountains.*



Figure 68N - *Intrusions: Looking north from PM 68 large-scale LADWP transmission lines occupy the view, with the rural residential community of Slash X Ranch beyond.*



Figure 68.75W - *Intrusions: Looking west from PM 68.75, transmission lines dominate the landscape, degrading the scenic view. A neighborhood of homes at Slash X Ranch is seen beyond.*



Figure 69E - *Intrusion: A rural residential property, as seen looking east from PM 69.*

Slash X Ranch



After passing the transmission lines they are gone from view. The northbound traveler sees only the historic Slash X Ranch, comprising a narrow cluster of homes stretching a half mile west of the highway, crossing to the east.

Slash X Ranch Cafe fronts the highway, a welcome stop for travelers in the otherwise undeveloped region, especially catering to weekend off-roaders who access it from the Stoddard Valley OHV Area, which surrounds it on the west side of the highway. An occasional track is visible in the landscape from off-road vehicle use.

Slash X Ranch is a historical feature along this stretch of highway, displaying unity with the region.

Constructed in 1942, at its peak Slash X Ranch ran about 3,000 head of cattle.

Because of its cultural and historic significance for the area, even with the number of structures and their proximity to the highway it is classified as a moderate intrusion (Figs.69E, 69W, 69S).

The viewing distance after passing the transmission lines is 1/4 mile.



Figure 69W - *Intrusion: Slash X Ranch property, seen looking west from PM 69. Two markers at the right of the photograph memorialize the history of Slash X (established 1942).*



Figure 69S - *Intrusion: Slash X Ranch Cafe, sitting west of the highway at PM 69. Transmission lines are seen beyond, looking south from PM 69.*

Stoddard Valley



Continuing north from PM 69, the traveler leaves Slash X Ranch behind. The highway bends slightly to the right and now follows a perfectly straight north/northwest direction for the next four and a half miles (Fig. 69N).



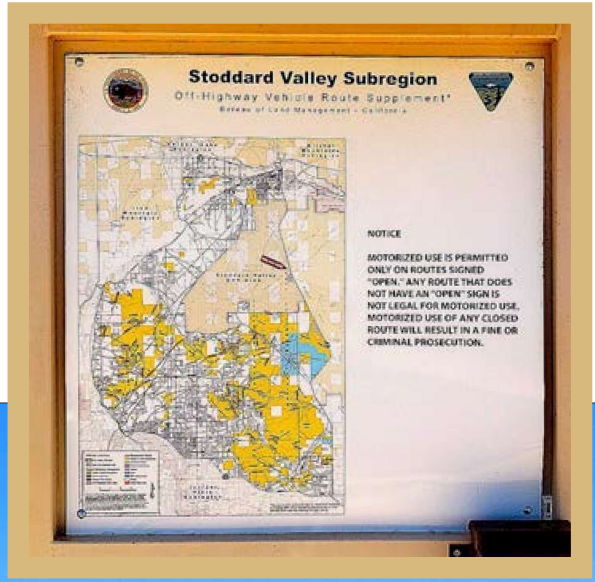
Figure 69N - *Scenic View: Looking north from PM 69 along the straight shot of highway stretching north from Slash X Ranch.*

Inset: Creosote dominates slopes around Stoddard Valley, sometimes hosting rare Dalea.

Just north of PM 69.5, the traveler sees BLM signage on the west side of the highway identifying an access point for the Stoddard Valley Off-Highway Vehicle Recreation Area.

The 53,000-acre open-riding area is bounded by Highway 15 to the west and SR 247 to the east. It includes the valley south and west of Slash X Ranch.

Sandy slopes and scenic rocky outcrops provide texture and contrast, bordering the flat expansive Creosote-dominant landscape. The kiosk and signage are classified as a minor intrusion (Fig. 69.5W).





PM 69.5W - *Scenic View with Intrusion: BLM signage and kiosk welcomes visitors into the Stoddard Valley OHV Recreation Area, looking west from about PM 69.5 toward the hills beyond.*

Inset: The prolific Desert Dandelion carpets the sand after a moist winter.

A line of wooden power poles travels parallel to the highway, about 100 yards to the west. Wooden power poles along the rural highway are part of the landscape's historic composition and are not classified as an intrusion (Fig. 70W, 70NW).

At about PM 70.4 a single line of tall transmission towers crosses the highway. They are visible over a distance of about 1/4 mile as the traveler approaches from either direction, where they are classified as a minor intrusion.

For the last 1/4 mile approaching from either direction they become more visible, but never dominate the view.
For this distance they are classified as a moderate intrusion (Fig. 70.4SW).>>

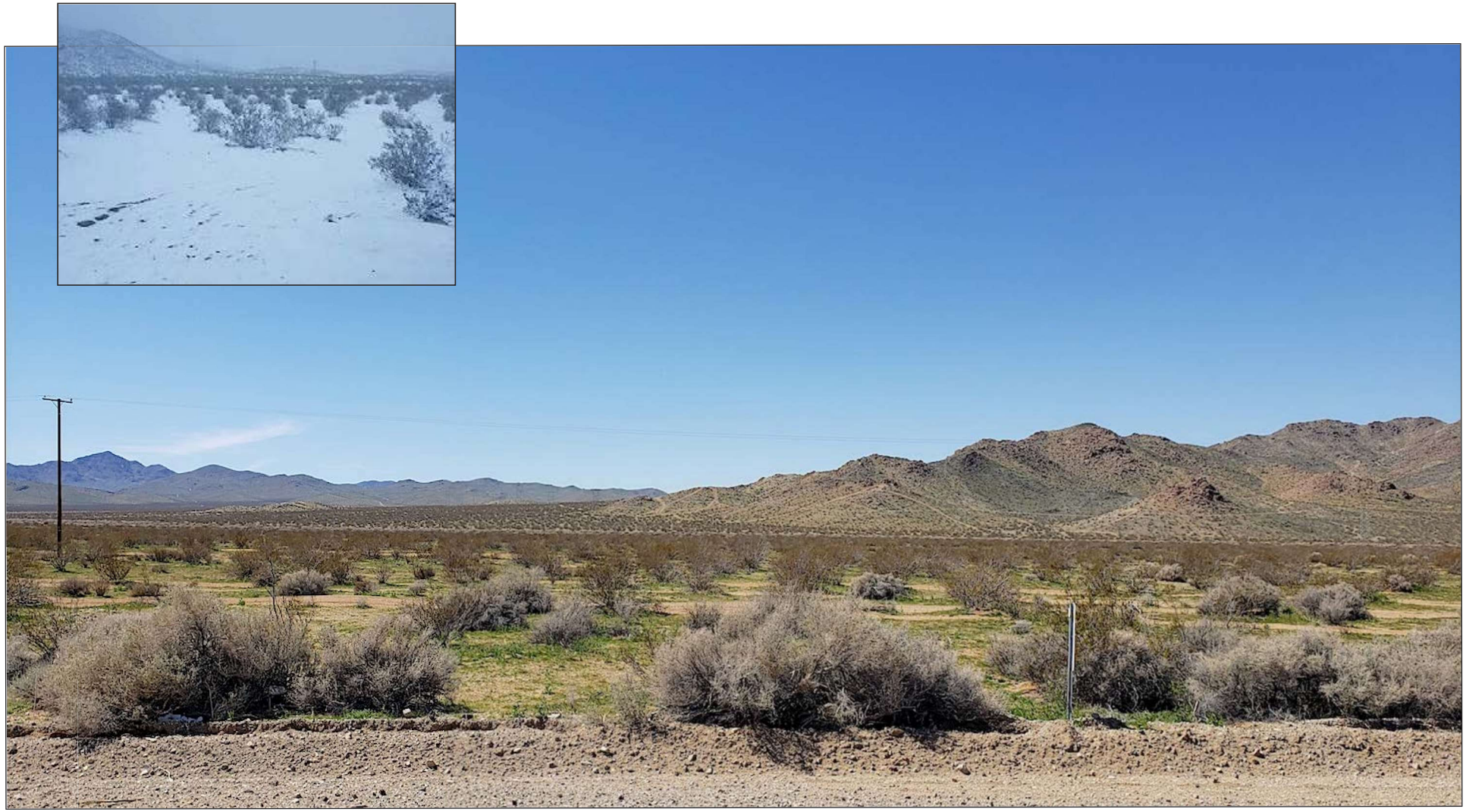


Figure 70W - *Scenic View: Looking west from PM 70. Inset: A snowy day in Stoddard Valley*



Figure 70.4SW - *Intrusion: Transmission line crosses SR 247 at PM 70.4.*

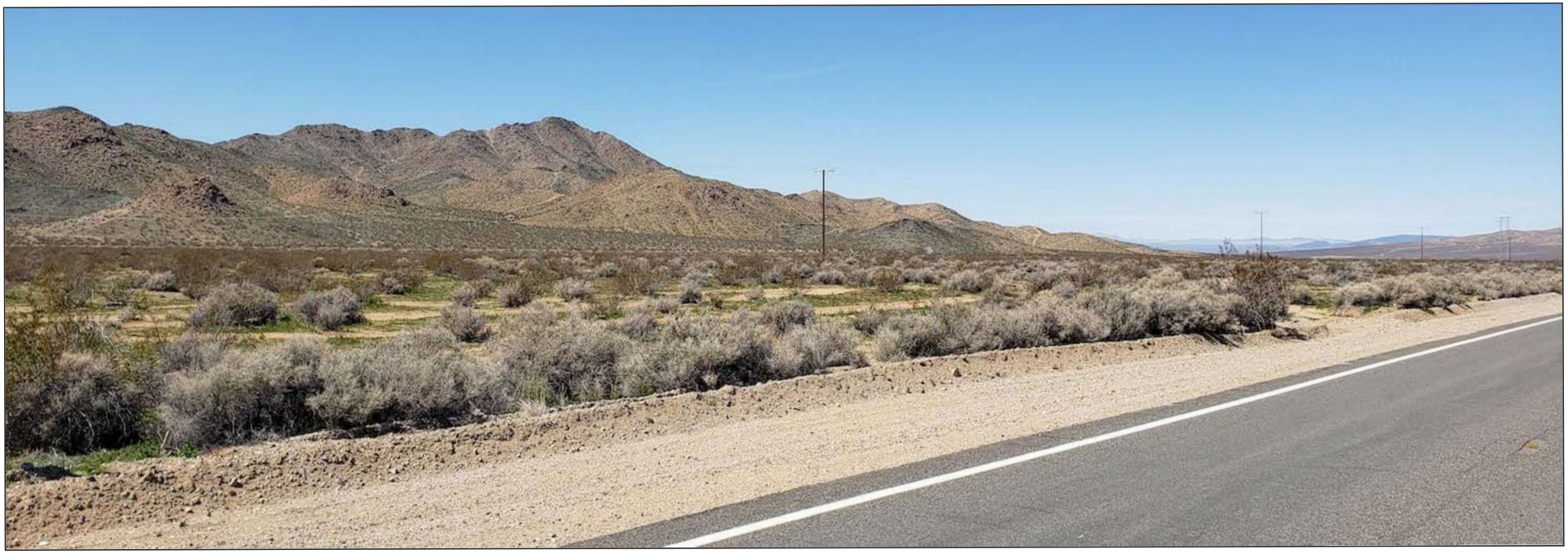


Figure 70NW - *Scenic View: Looking northwest from PM 70.*



Figure 71NE - *Scenic View: Looking northeast from PM 71.*



Figure 71E - *Scenic View: Looking east from PM 71 toward Creosote-spotted hills.*



Inset: The Greater Roadrunner, not built for flying, can glide short distances. Reported speed running is 18 mph.

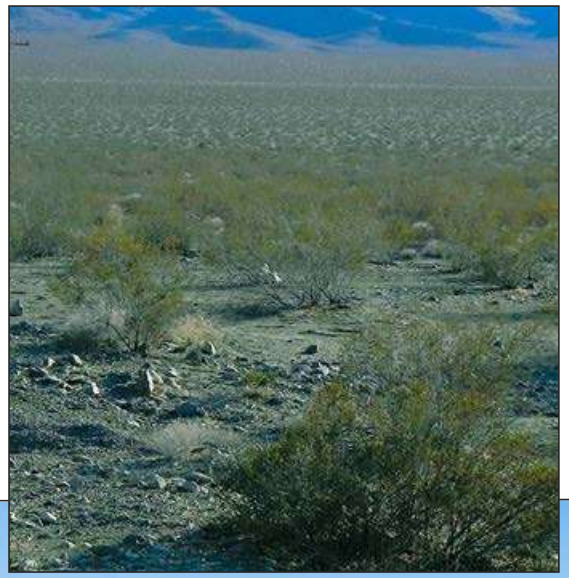
Continuing north from PM 70.5 along the straight gently-undulating highway, the traveler experiences intact wide open views in all directions with very few intrusions for the next four miles.
The scenic valley and surrounding sandy slopes appear evenly spotted with now smaller Creosote bushes (Figs. 71NE, 71E, 72SE).
The northbound traveler will see the highway climbing into the hills ahead (Fig.72N).



Figure 72SE - *Scenic View: Looking southeast from PM 72 to the distant Ord Mountains.*



Figure 72N - *Scenic View: Looking north from PM 72, the gently undulating highway continues in a straight line for another mile and a half before curving east up into the hills.*



On a clear day trucks may be seen in the distance traveling along the I-15, seen from about PM 72.5 for the northbound traveler and PM 74.5 for the southbound traveler. The freeway is at a distance of 4-5 miles from these viewpoints, and does not dominate the landscape. It is classified as a minor intrusion for 1/2 mile (Fig. 73NW).

Views to the south continue to be scenic (Fig. 73SW, 74SE), with the often-snowy Mt. San Gorgonio (the highest peak in Southern California) coming into view for the southbound traveler directly in line with the highway, about PM 73 (Fig. 73S)>>

<<Inset: Perspective of millions of Creosote bushes blending in the distance into a carpet of solid green.
Inset below: Black-tailed hare, commonly known as the Desert Jack Rabbit.

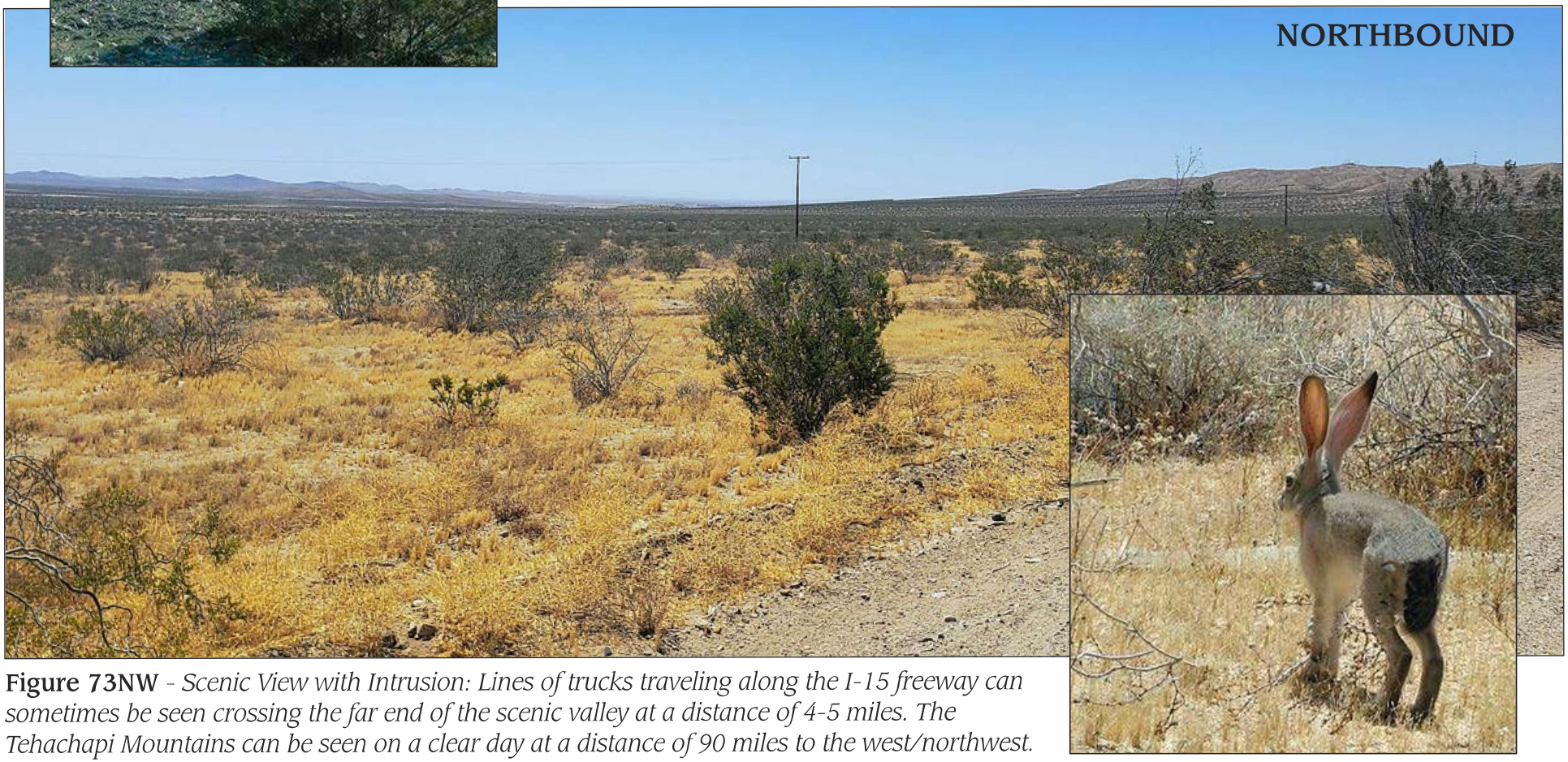


Figure 73NW - *Scenic View with Intrusion: Lines of trucks traveling along the I-15 freeway can sometimes be seen crossing the far end of the scenic valley at a distance of 4-5 miles. The Tehachapi Mountains can be seen on a clear day at a distance of 90 miles to the west/northwest.*



Figure 73SW - *Scenic View: Rocky hills punctuate Stoddard Valley, looking southwest from PM 73.*



Figure 73S - *Scenic View: The snowy peak of Mount San Gorgonio can be seen at a distance of 50 miles, directly in line with the highway from about PM 73 looking south.*

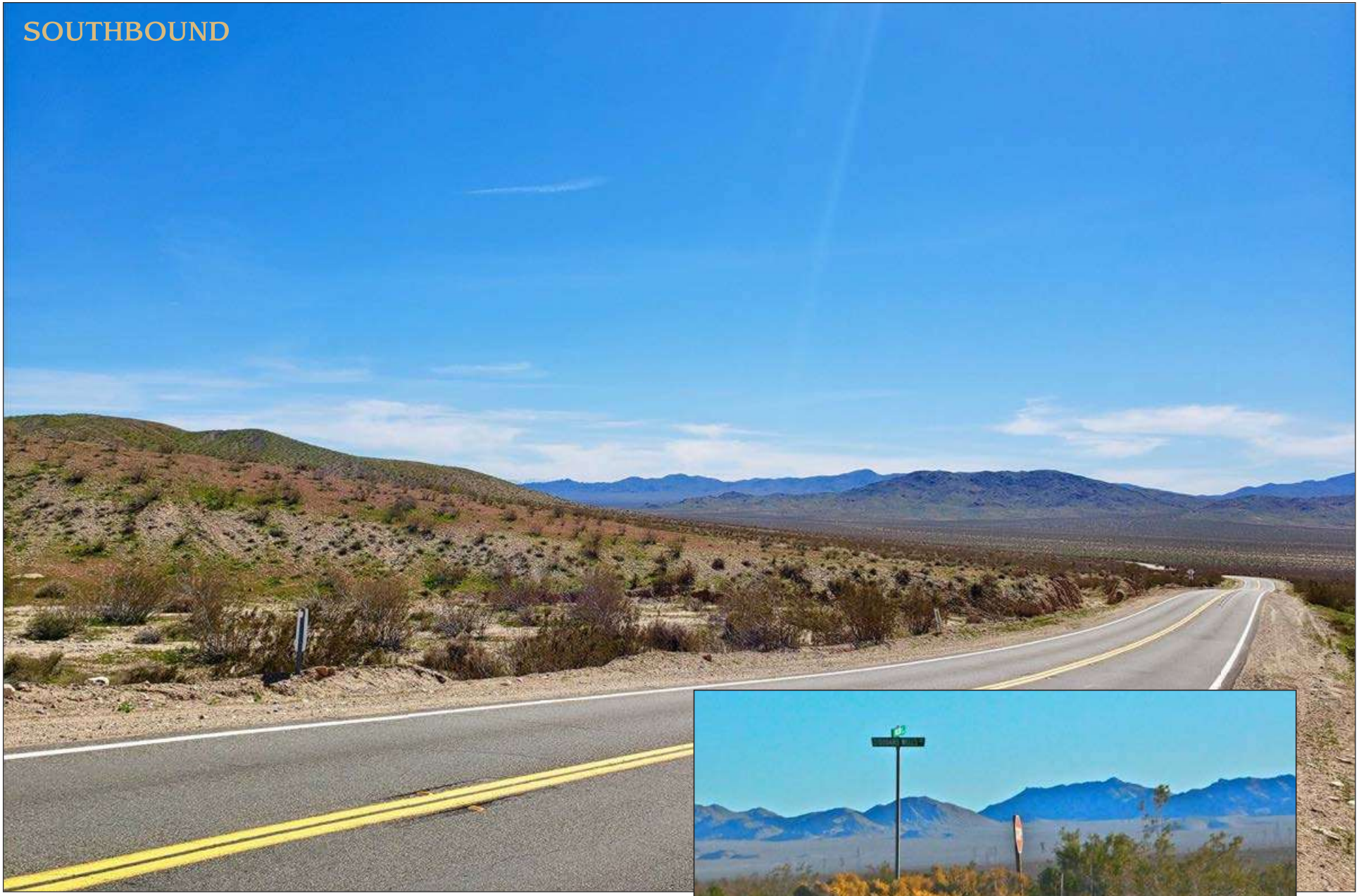


Figure 74SE - *Scenic View: Looking southeast from PM 74 over the vivid landscape of Stoddard Valley.*

Inset: Highway sign marking historic Stoddard Wells Road.>>

After passing Stoddard Wells Road and before PM 73.5, the highway bends right for the northbound traveler and snakes up into the low sandy hills ahead reaching an elevation of 2,873 ft. just before PM 74.5. The terraced slopes and chain link fencing of the Barstow Landfill come into partial view between the hills on the east side of the highway only momentarily, as the traveler ascends (Fig. 74NE).

The entry to the landfill sits just past PM 74.5, north of the hill's summit on the downslope. The terraced landfill site is well-mitigated, and doesn't dominate views of the landscape. For the northbound traveler, the facility is mostly not visible from the highway. For 1/8 mile near the entry, it is classified as a moderate intrusion (Fig. 74.5E).

Views of the terraced slopes of the mitigated facility are mainly experienced when approaching from the north. For the southbound traveler, the hill formation of the landfill appears natural for some distance before the land use becomes clear. For one mile approaching the entry, the traveler will begin to recognize the landfill. It does not dominate the landscape and it is classified as a moderate intrusion (Figs. 76S, 75.5S, 75SE).>>>



Figure 74NE - Intrusion: Looking northeast from PM 74, the terraced slopes and chain link fencing might be briefly visible to the northbound traveler.

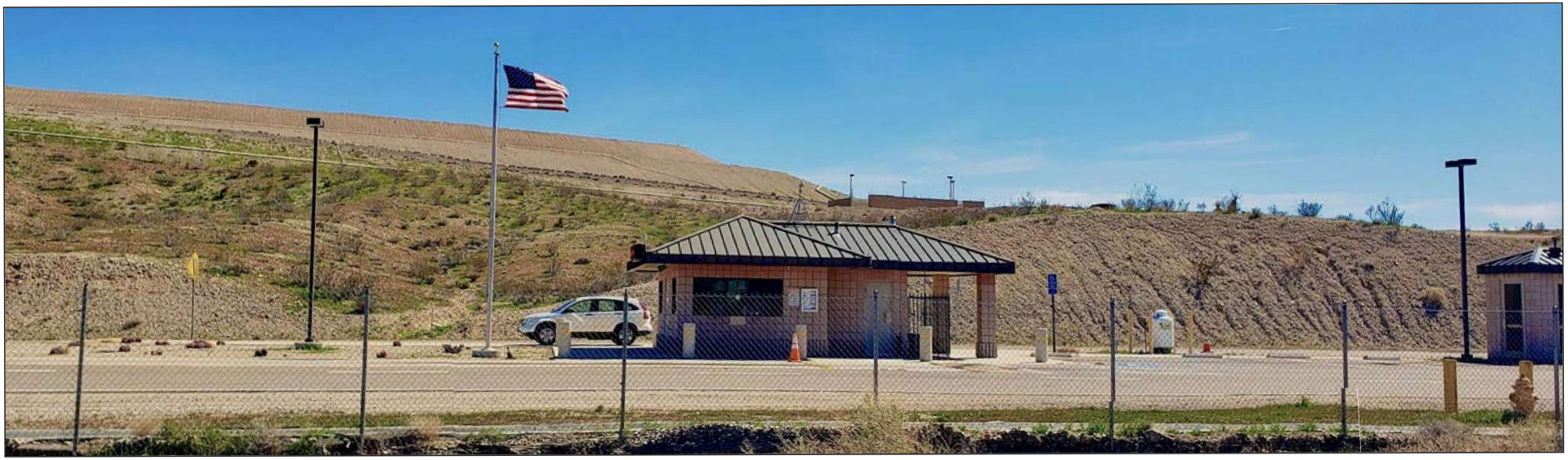


Figure 74.5E - *Intrusion: The entry to the Barstow Landfill sits on the east side of the highway near PM 74.5.*



Figure 76S - *Scenic View: Traveling south from PM 76 the Barstow Landfill begins to come into view (right side of photograph), blending very well with the landscape.*



Figure 75.5S - *Scenic View with Intrusion: The Barstow Landfill coming into clearer focus as the only intrusion in view, looking south from PM 75.5.*



Figure 75SE - *Intrusion: The graded slopes of the Barstow Landfill are visible east of the highway, looking southeast at PM 75.*

Descending in a northeast direction past the landfill, the traveler continues to enjoy huge vistas over the wide-open landscape. The highway takes a bend to the west at about PM 75.25, to follow a north/northwest direction. As Barstow comes into the distant view, for 1/8 mile it is classified as a moderate intrusion.

Views beyond Barstow stretch northeast across the Mojave River Valley to the peaks of the Calico Mountains (Fig. 75.5N).

Soon the northbound traveler approaches the city limits of Barstow, where the Scenic Highway ends at PM 76.

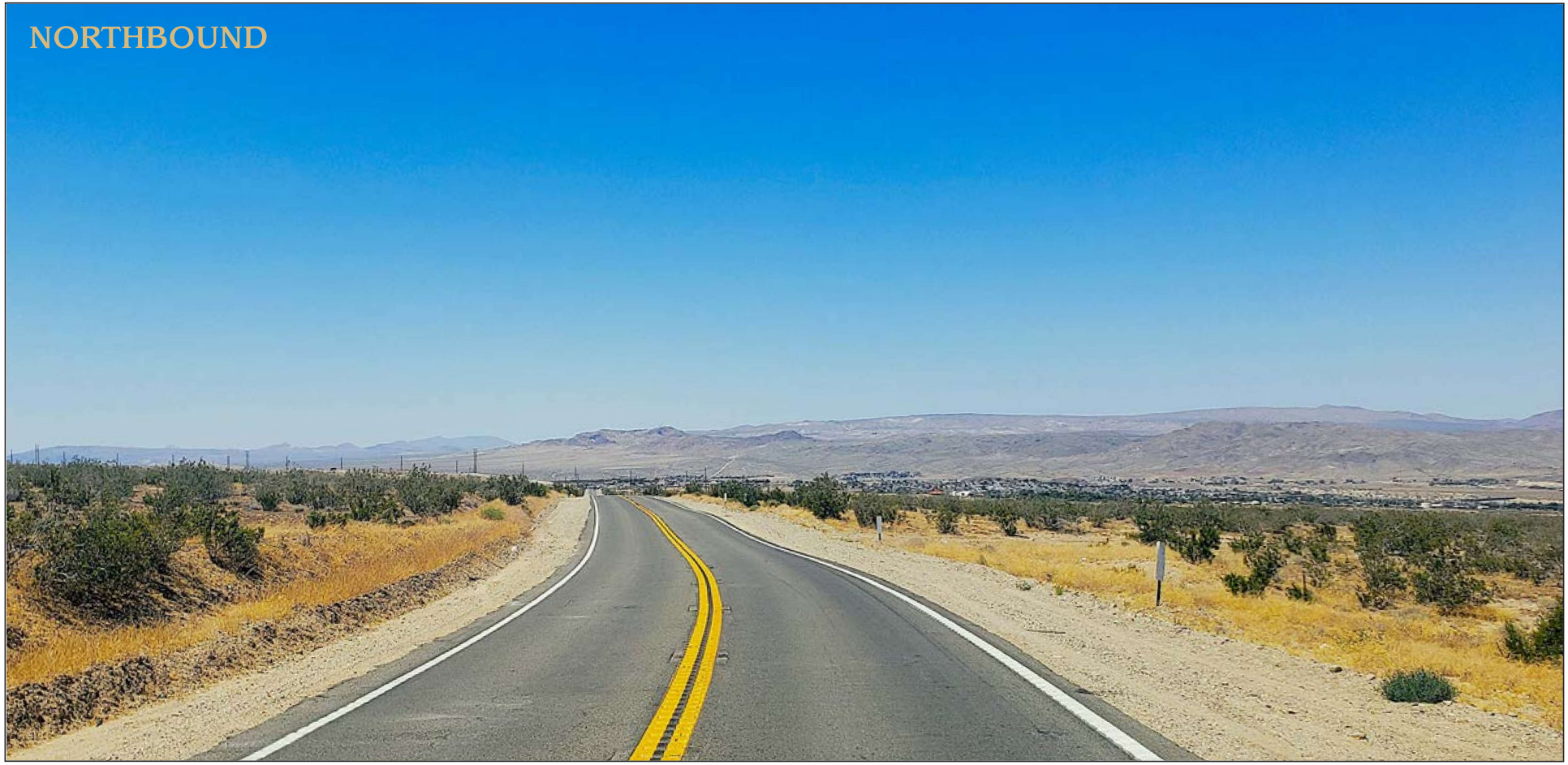


Figure 75.5N - *Scenic View with Intrusion: Looking northeast from PM 75.5, the City of Barstow and the Mojave River Valley begin to come into view, with the Calico Mountains beyond.*

For the southbound traveler leaving Route 66 and Barstow, the Scenic Highway begins at PM 76.

This broad vista dominated by Creosote bushes is almost completely intact and very scenic, especially to the southeast looking toward Daggett Ridge (Fig. 76SE).





Figure 76SE - *Scenic View: Looking southeast from PM 76, across the broad gently rising landscape toward Daggett Ridge beyond.*

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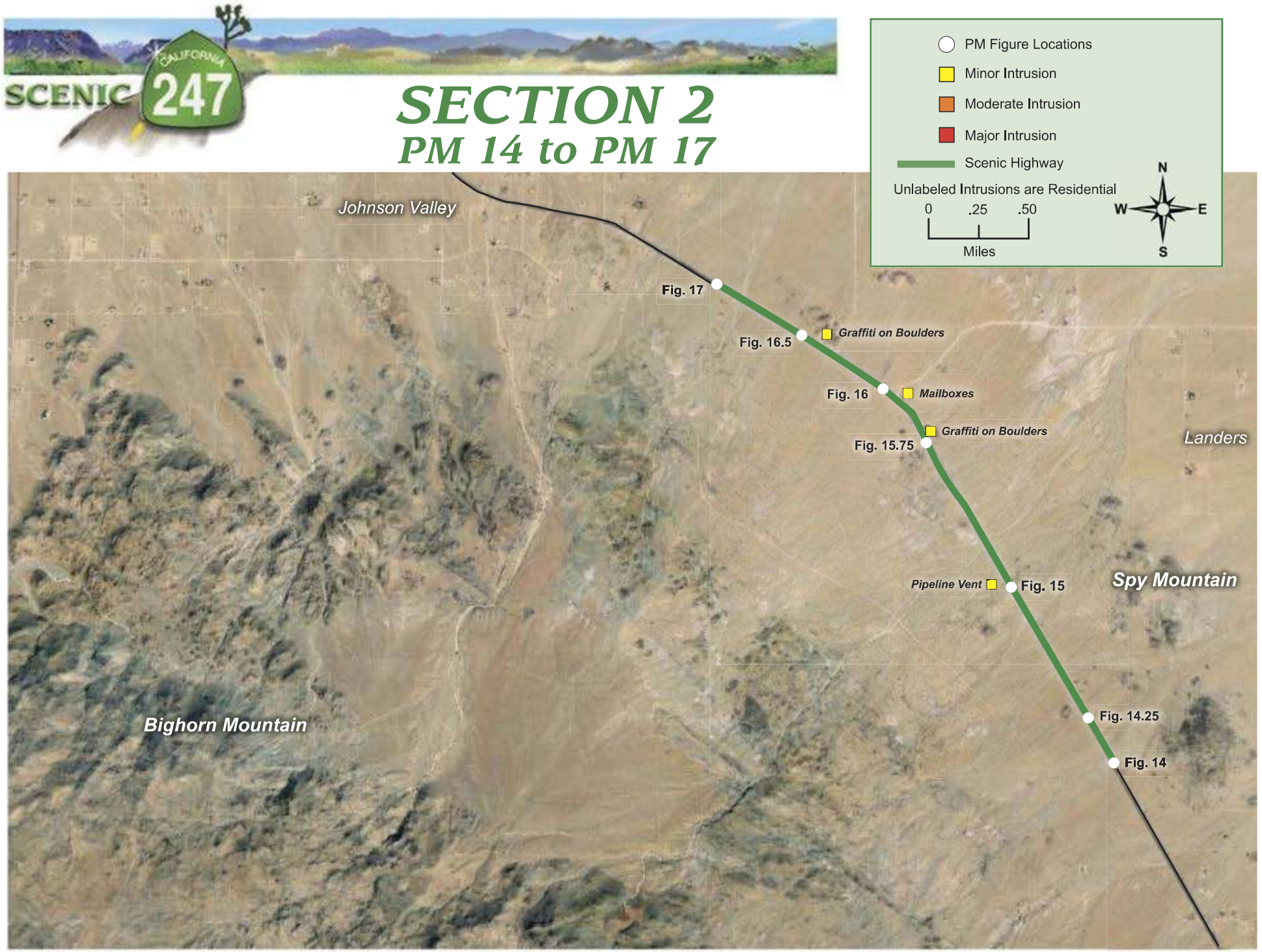
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SCENIC
CALIFORNIA
247
VISUAL ASSESSMENT
Scenic Highway Proposal
for
SR 247
MAPS
Figure Locations for Visual Intrusions and Scenic Views

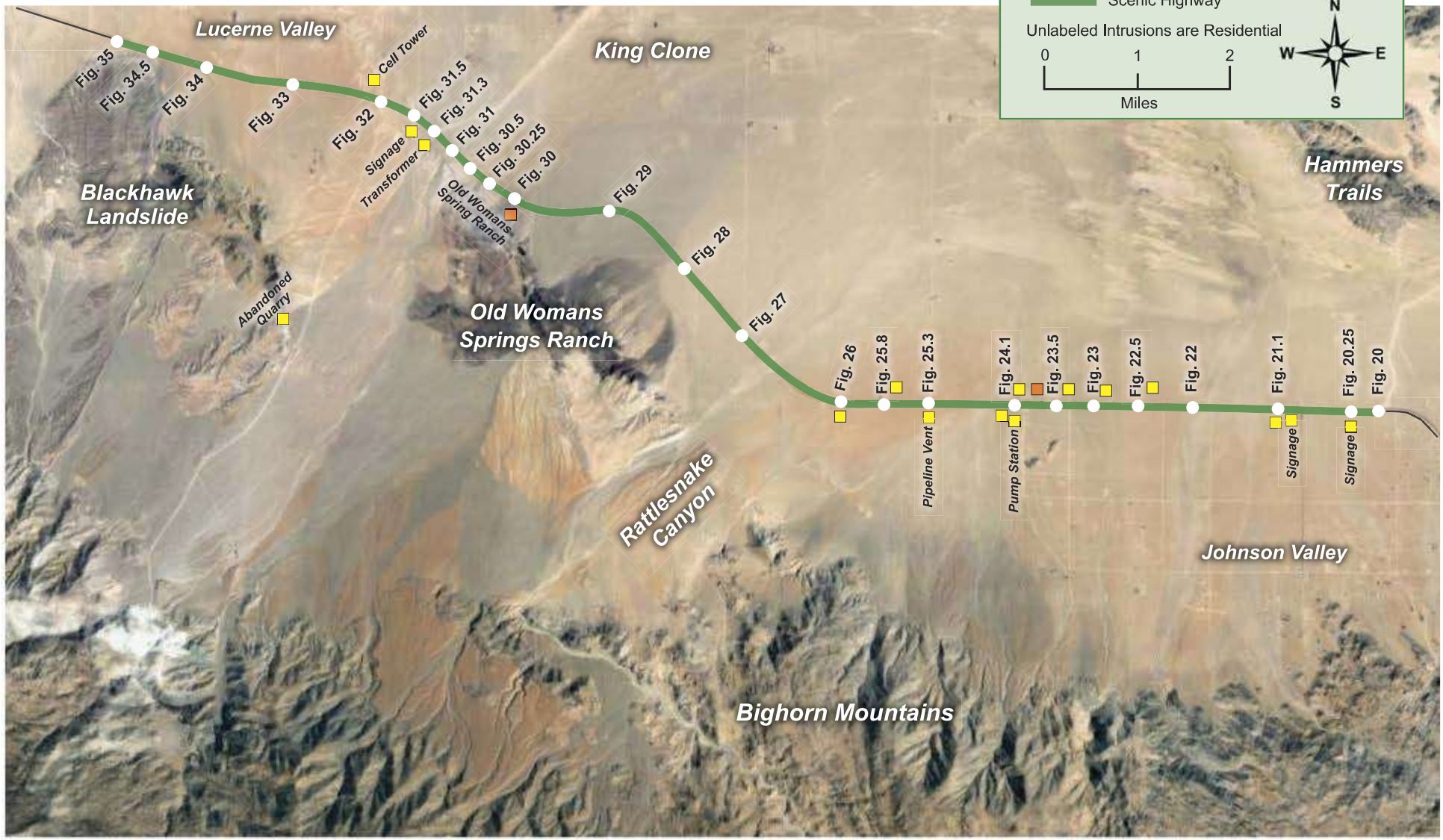
SCENIC 247

SECTION 1
PM 4 to PM 6.5



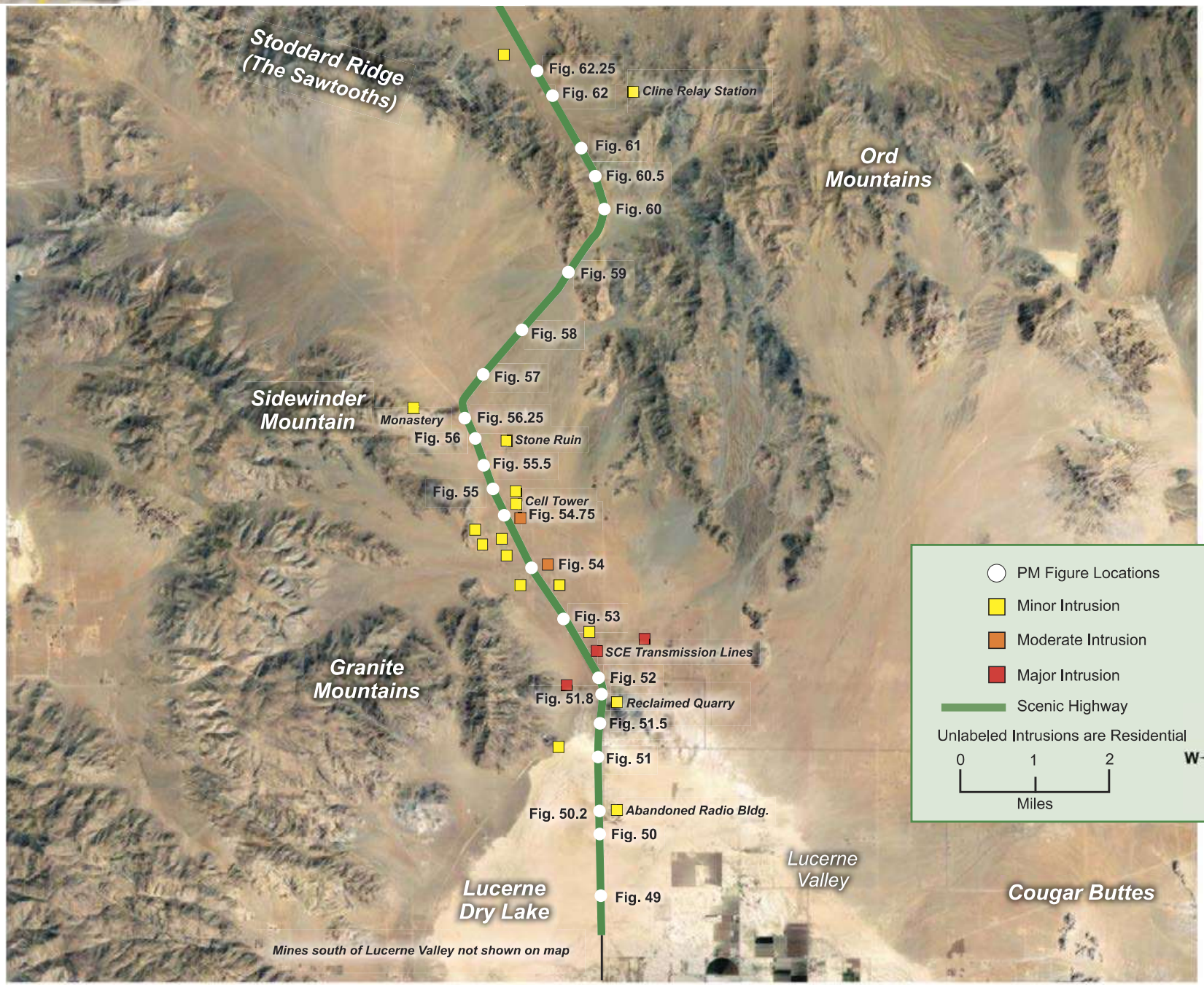

SCENIC 247
CALIFORNIA
SECTION 2
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PM Figure Locations
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Unlabeled Intrusions are Residential
0 .25 .50
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E
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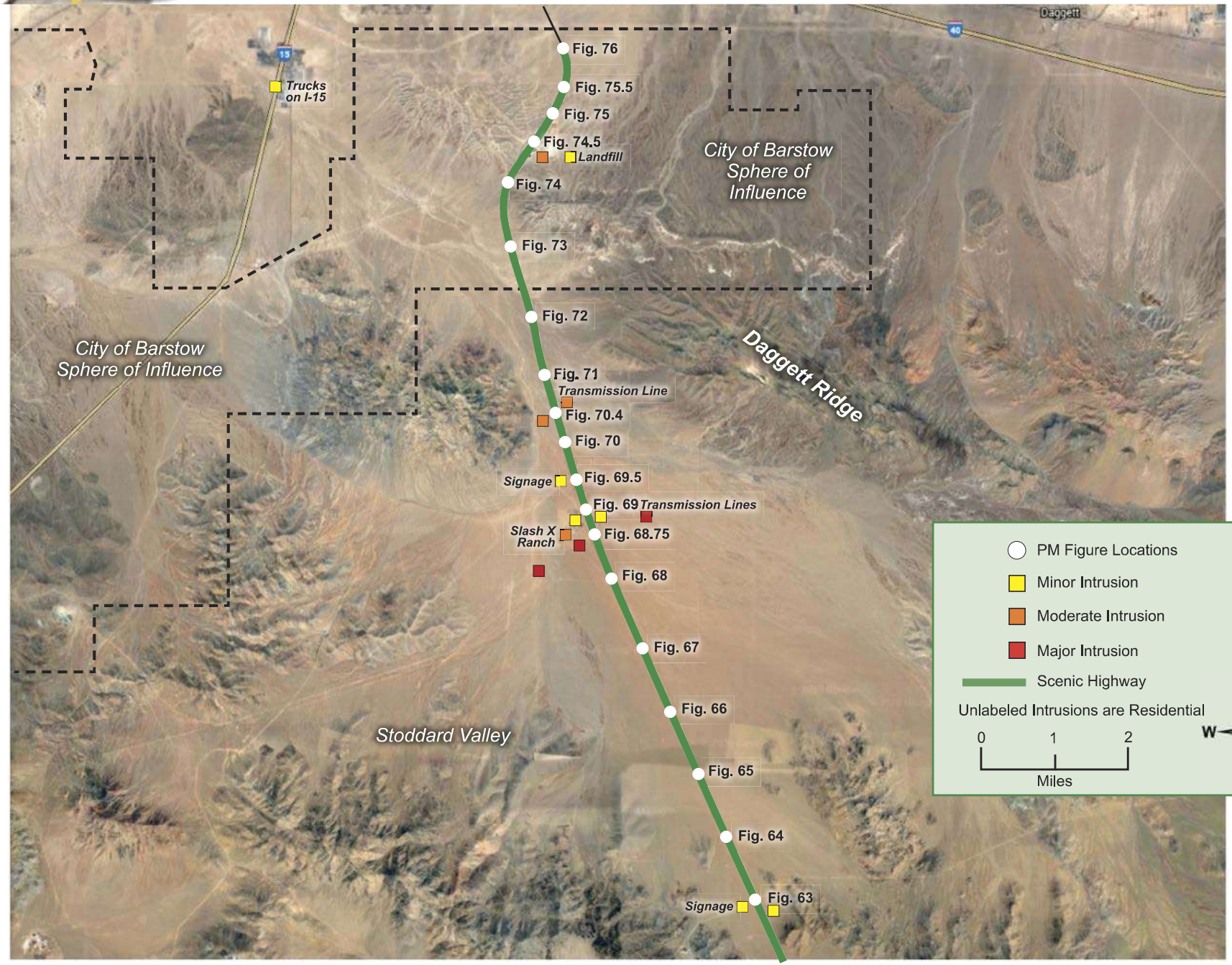


SECTION 4 (South)

PM 48.5 to PM 63



SECTION 4 (North)
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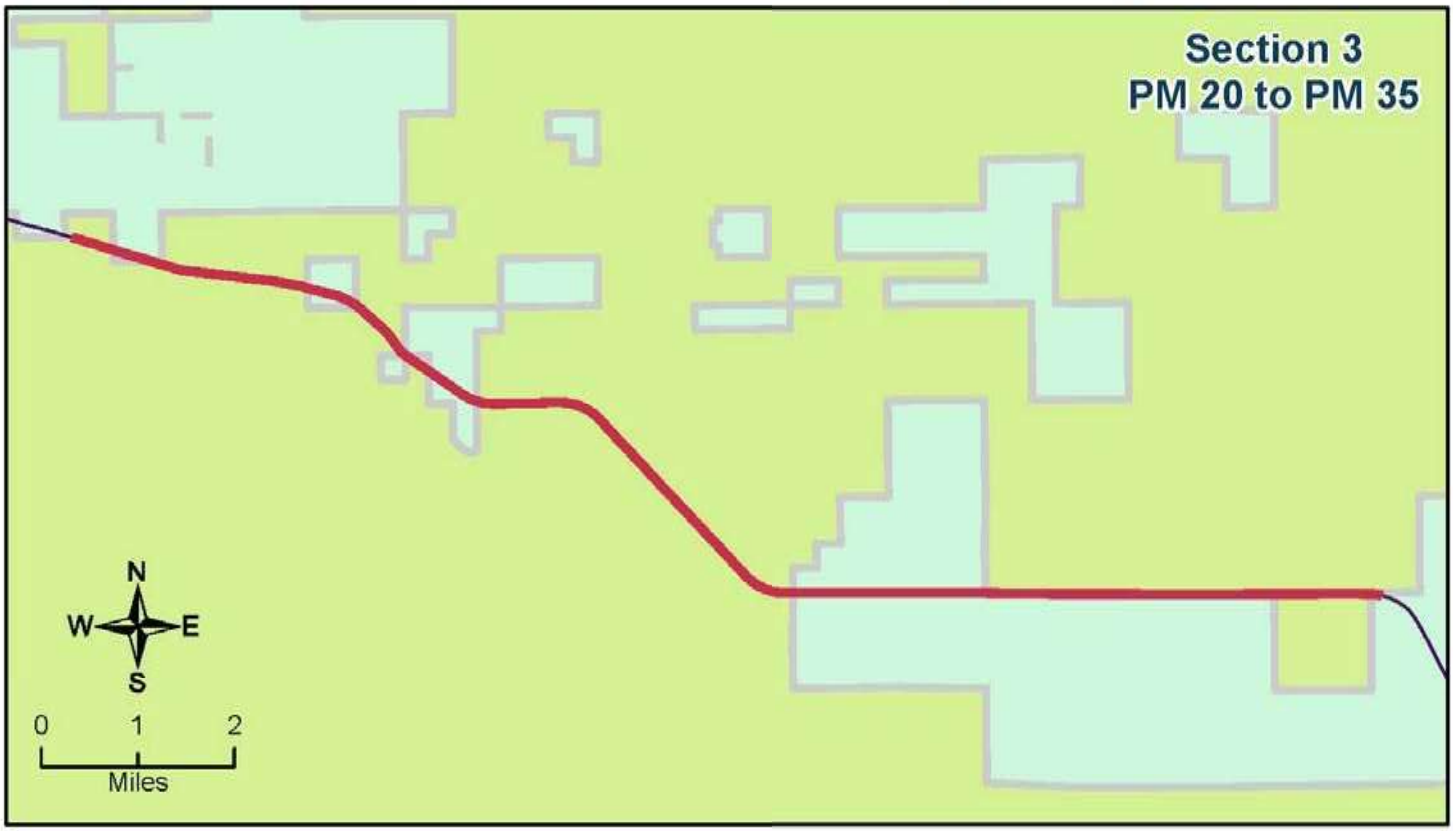


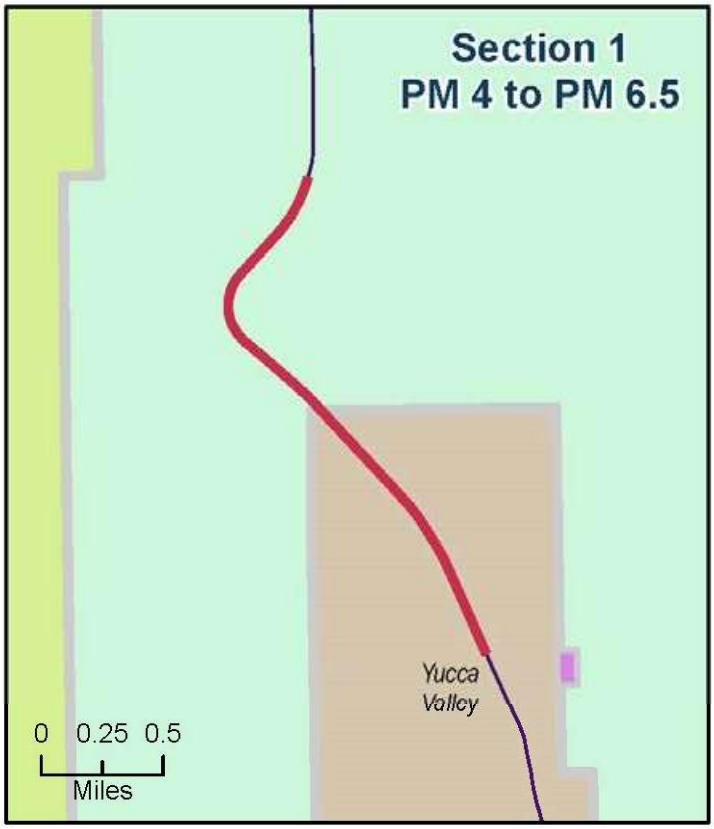
Scenic Highway Proposal *for* SR 247

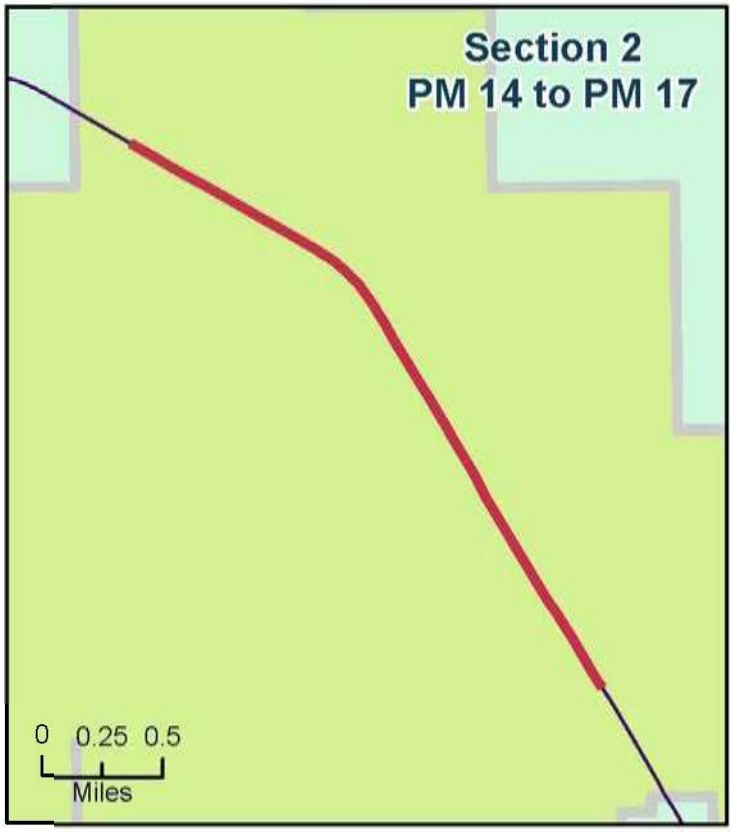
MAPS

Land Use Type

Land Use Type - Scenic Highway 247

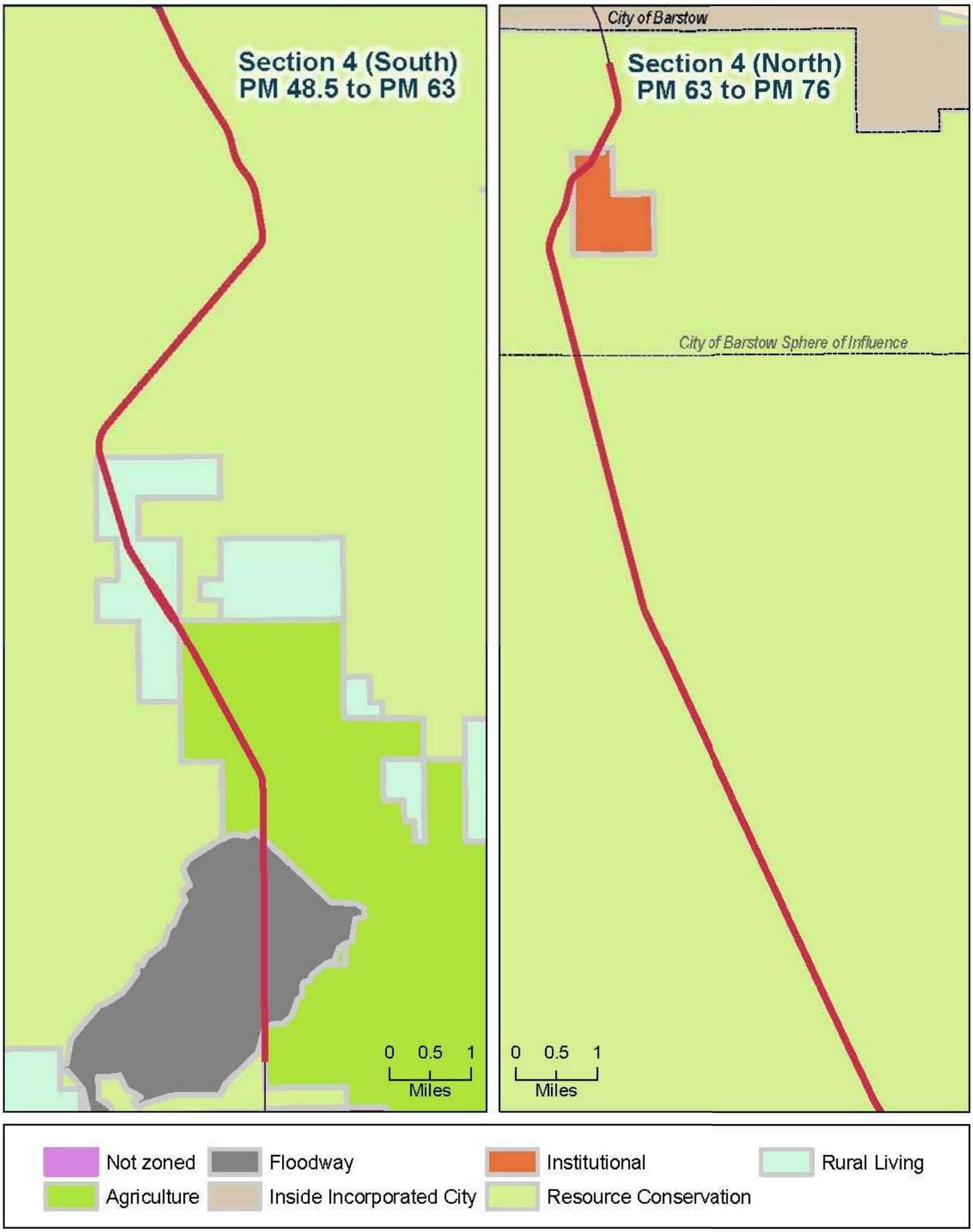


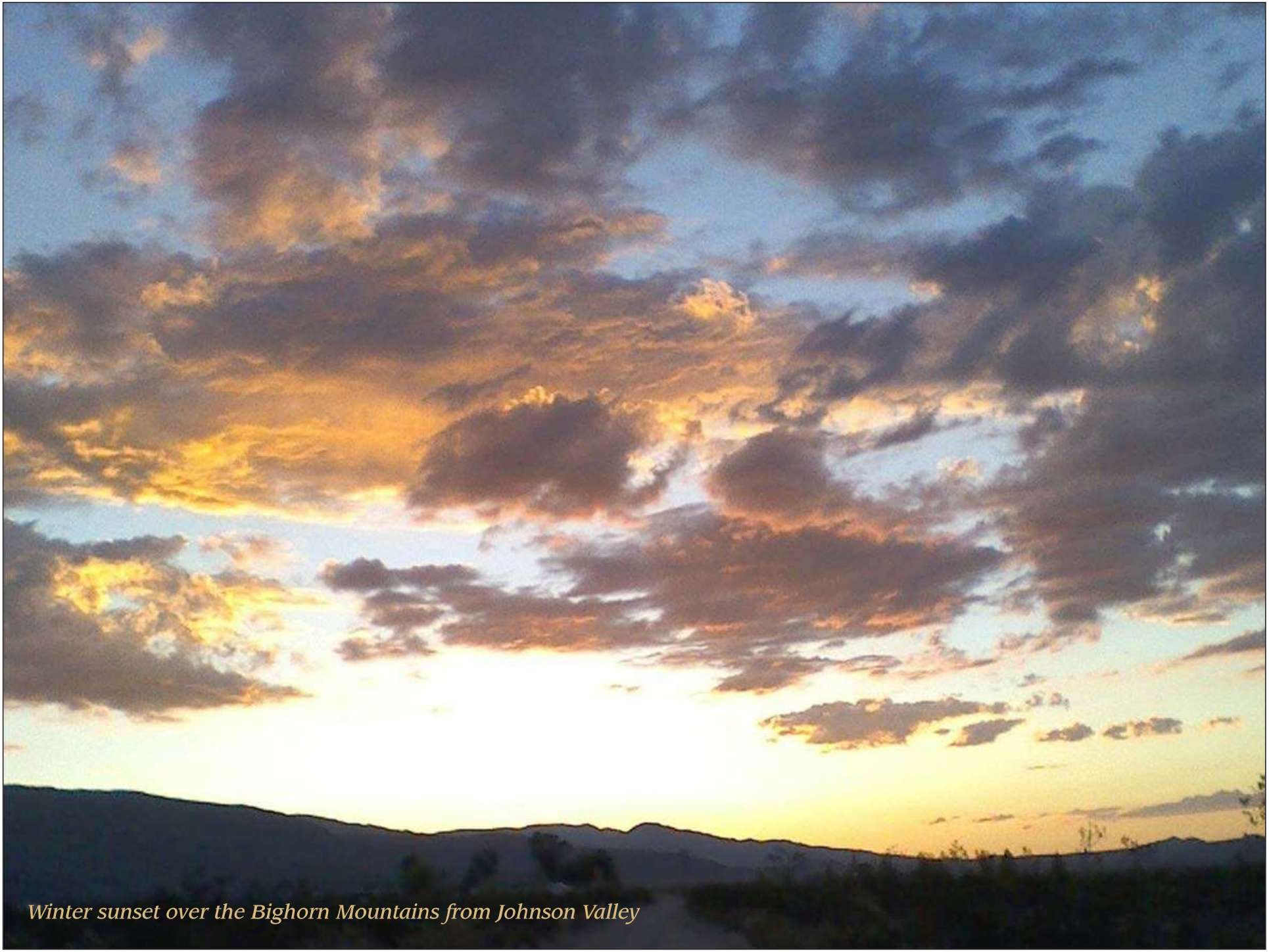




Not zoned
Agriculture
Floodway
Inside Incorporated City
Institutional
Resource Conservation
Rural Living

Land Use Type - Scenic Highway 247





Winter sunset over the Bighorn Mountains from Johnson Valley