

Amargosa/Grimshaw Special Recreation Management Area (SRMA)

RMA/RECREATION MANAGEMENT ZONE (RMZ) OBJECTIVE(S) DECISIONS

The Amargosa River Valley is located in southeastern Inyo County, California and occupies the heart of the Tecopa Basin, east of the southeastern corner of Death Valley National Park. The area has a harsh climate, unobstructed views of Desert Mountains, and few human settlements. The narrow Amargosa Canyon is known for its dense greenery and the shallow Amargosa River, complete with "hanging gardens" and a small waterfall. The river flows year-long, dropping south from Nevada, and flowing into Death Valley National Park. A maintained hiking trail runs the length of the river from Tecopa to the China Ranch. The Shoshone to Tecopa area contains several large springs including some popular for soaking. They occur on private & public land, and some are developed while others remain natural.

Sperry Wash Route is an approved route of travel and popular OHV route that follows the Amargosa Wild and Scenic River north from Dumont Dunes along the path of the Old Spanish National Historic Trail, also the path of the Mormon Trail, and part of the route of the Tonopah & Tidewater Railroad grade. This route passes the historic Sperry town site as it goes through a non-wilderness corridor. The northern end of the route comes out just east of Tecopa. Running for about 16 miles, the route is open to all vehicle types and permitted uses are allowed, including limited commercial filming and special events.

Objective Statement: Designate this area as a Special Recreation Management Area(SRMA). Manage this area for passive recreation giving a priority to opportunities and resources associated with the Wild and Scenic Amargosa River, and the Old Spanish National Historic Trail. Develop and manage facilities that provide visitors a safe non-intrusive experience in a remote and sensitive ecological wonder of the desert. Place a premium on partnerships and regional cooperative management efforts. Manage the setting and resources for a larger national and international audience to reflect the nature of tourism in this area from around the world.

Activities: Hiking, running, equestrian use, bike touring, mountain biking, dual sport touring, 4 x 4 exploration, scenic touring, bird watching, photography, celestial observations, painting, study of nature & geology, geo-caching, rock collecting, picnicking, mine exploration, and historic re-creations. This area includes natural hot springs for relaxing and healing; physical activities include peak bagging, vision quest and long distance endurance events. A popular activity is star gazing because of support facilities in a remote area with dark night skies. Visitors enjoy learning about, viewing and experiencing the Old Spanish National Historic Trail; emigrant & mining history; and the Wild and Scenic Amargosa River. Students and academia study geology and natural resources; resource organizations have field trips and symposiums. Grimshaw and Amargosa ACEC were merged in 2004 forming Amargosa River ACEC.

Experiences: Visitors frequent Amargosa Canyon & Grimshaw Lake (Tecopa Marsh) for a deeper, immersive desert experience. Having a tactile experience of the desert heat is a significant component of visitor's experiences. A remote and naturally flowing desert river is a very rare & special place drawing people willing to go out of their way to experience this unique & tranquil setting. Visitors come here primarily to be in nature, and usually because they are looking for a special oasis. Visitors come here to re-trace the steps of history; all branches of the Old Spanish National Historic Trail, the Mormon Trail & the T & T historic railroad are here because of reliable surface water. Scenic and historic touring of the landscape in small groups & families provides for a shared sense of exploration & learning in a landscape that looks like when early explorers & settlers visited; the land time forgot.

Benefits: Personal benefits range from exercise & fitness to self-discovery, confidence building & feelings of self-worth, plus healing and meditation. Groups enjoy shared companionship exploring a landscape known as the place where time stands still. The hot springs provide therapeutic healing and relaxing recreation soaking. Foreign travelers provide frequent encounters among visitors speaking different languages, providing social benefits of trust and a shared sense of being human with other visitors in an inhospitable environment. This SRMA provides significant economic benefits to rural communities dependent on travelers & outdoor recreation. The importance of the resources in this area played a key role in the human survival in this regional, and supported the first overland trade route (and subsequent migration route) to connect our shores. This area provides outstanding environmental benefits with a tremendous amount of endemic, rare, sensitive and endangered species. This is the largest and most undisturbed free flowing river in the Mojave desert and supports a wide range of aquatic and riparian species benefiting an entire cycle of life producing clean air, water and scenic views.

RECREATION SETTING CHARACTERISTICS (RSC) DESCRIPTIONS

Physical Components: This SRMA has qualities of the landscape fitting the *Front Country Classification*. The Amargosa River provides scenic views on Highway 127 from Shoshone, to Tecopa. The river flows thru Tecopa Marsh (Grimshaw) and down Amargosa Canyon, framed by scenic vertical walls with columns, thrones and multiple colors. The Canyon is remote & tranquil with dark skies, spectacular scenery and a symphony of birds, cycads, crickets & frogs. Flowing all year the river supports native pupfish, a thick ribbon of native & invasive plants, badger, coyote, raptors, amphibians, small mammals, reptiles, rodents and birds. The Tecopa Marsh is a beautiful large reflective pool, which flows under the paved road from borehole hot spring, perfect for soaking.

A wide range of lodging facilities, gas & food are available. The Shoshone Shear Center provides workspace, kitchen, dining & housing facilities for students. Dublin Hills historic town site is popular for exploring. Dispersed camping occurs along Furnace Creek Wash Road, and visitors explore nearby ruins at the historic sites of Greenwater Junction and the Amargosa Borax Works. On the east side Emigrant Pass provides outstanding views of the Old Spanish NHT, which continues thru Tecopa & down the river. The ruins of historic mines, a stamp mill, an old cemetery and the Sperry Wash Route are easily accessed in the southeast corner.

Social Components: The qualities of the social component in this area qualify for the *Back Country Classification*. The social setting is in harmony with the natural surroundings and reflects the calmer, more peaceful and inquisitive nature of the more experienced travelers visiting here. The area is dominated by American visitors during the fall, winter and spring; and by European & Asian visitors from late spring through summer to the fall. This is one of the most popular destinations in the country for winter field trips by geology classes from colleges & universities around the country. Several major environmental groups regularly have field trips and meeting here to monitor and support the area. This area is used by groups for re-creating and celebrating historic events tied to emigrants & Death Valley. In this landscape the components of remoteness, extreme weather conditions & hardy travel conditions tend to meld boundaries and open visitor's perspective of a shared travel experience.

Operational Components: The conditions of this area meet the *Back Country Classification*. Access into and through the area is along two lane paved roads & maintained dirt roads. Amargosa canyon was closed to motorized use in 1973; access is limited to foot and equestrian trail use. Tecopa Marsh (Grimshaw Lake) is well traversed by paved roads and adjacent to a small community with hot springs lodging & basic recreational services. The Sperry Wash Route is a remote 4 x 4 overland route providing backcountry

access along the south-eastern part of this area. This area contains extensive mines accessed by old narrow roads not maintained; a few historic cemeteries and scenic overlooks. County roads provide all-weather access into and through the SRMA, including remote sites for camping and hiking.

MANAGEMENT ACTIONS & ALLOWABLE USES

Recreation and Visitor Services Program: Provide for passive recreation activities in a manner compatible with the protection of sensitive wildlife species and scenic values. Minimize man-caused intrusions to protect high-value scenery (geologic features and vegetative patterns). Prohibit off-road vehicle use throughout the Natural Area. Designate & maintain the Tonopah and Tidewater Railroad grade through the canyon as a hiking trail, including required ADA access; use ranger patrols to enforce restrictions; develop cooperative agreements with private landowners to provide limitations on vehicle access, to maintain a right of access for compatible recreation & hiking opportunities, and to control invasive species. Manage all routes of travel as open, limited or closed, as designated in the Local TTMP.

Acres by Alternative on BLM Lands:

No Action	Preferred Alternative	1	2	3	4
0	65270	60456	60456	60456	60456

Other Programs: Obtain easement across private land into north end of Amargosa Canyon; Improve riparian habitat quality by removing encroaching tamarisk; acquire private & state lands through exchange; protect sensitive resources during fire suppression; allow for other land uses in a manner which also provides for the continued protection of sensitive resources present in this area; prohibit surface and ground water disturbing activities associated with geothermal development and exploration; monitor area resources and uses. Right of way authorizations within the Amargosa Wild and Scenic River Corridor will be addressed within the Amargosa River Management Plan. New rights-of-way would not be authorized within the Wild and Scenic Amargosa River boundary, and the river boundary would be designated as an exclusion area. Continue to monitor the Martha Watkins occupancy trespass case and explore options for re-use of the site for outdoor classroom, partnerships & public trailhead hiking opportunities.

Renewable energy development is not an allowable use in SRMAs due to the incompatibility with the values of the SRMA. Two exceptions to this management action are: 1) geothermal development is an allowable use if a geothermal-only DFA overlays the SRMA designation and complies with a “no surface occupancy” restriction; and, 2) In the Preferred Alternatives if a DRECP variance land designation overlays the SRMA, renewable energy may be allowed on a case-by-case basis if the proposed project is found to be compatible with the specific SRMA values.

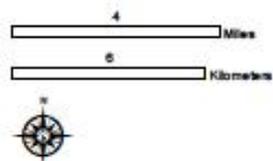
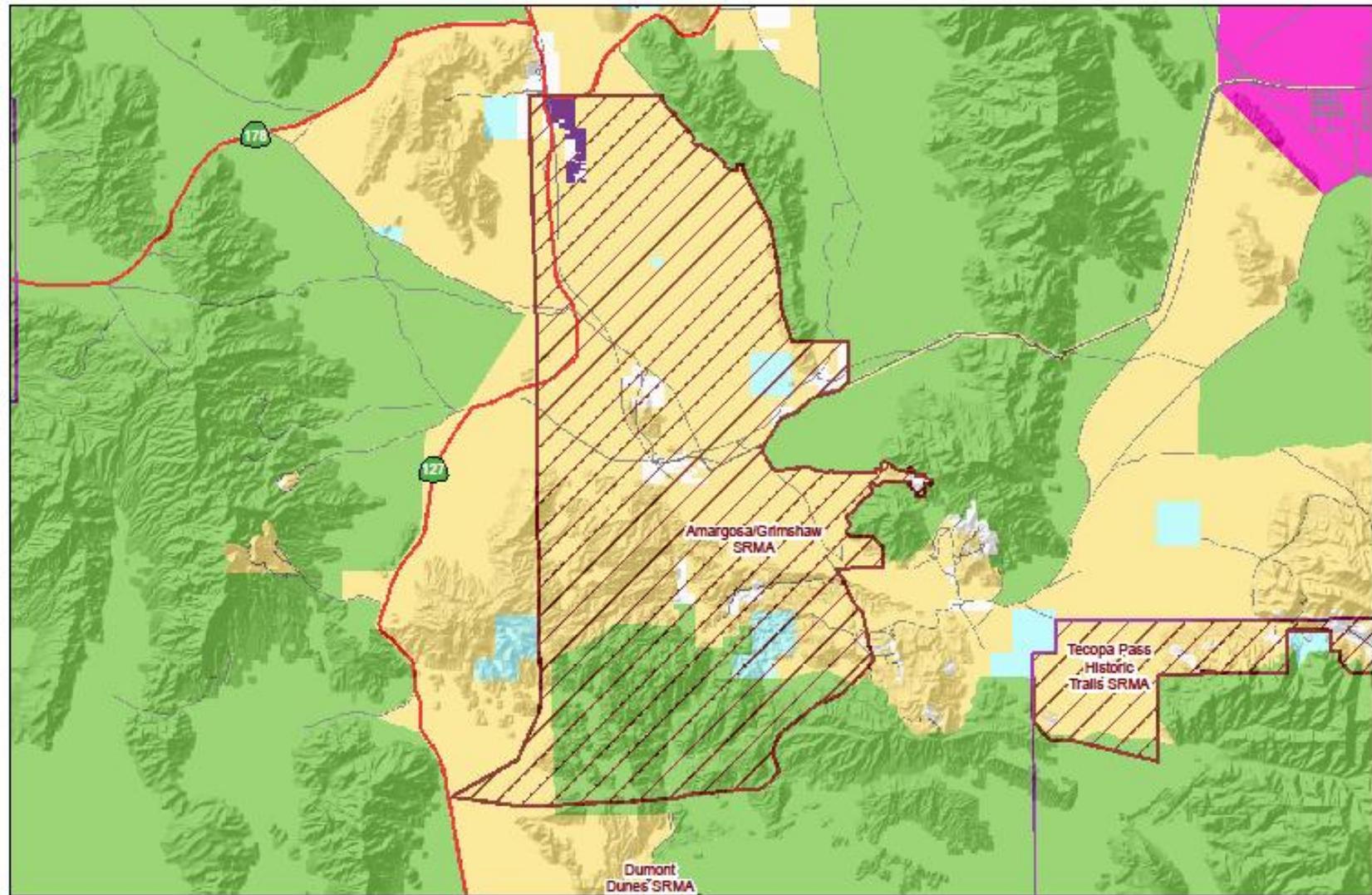
Implementation Decisions: An activity level plan would be developed to identify and designate current and future recreational opportunities, appropriate facilities to provide for and manage the proposed uses, parameters for Special Recreation Permitting of events, staffing, funding, parameters for facility and road/trail maintenance, partnerships, possible recreation fee considerations, and an implementation schedule. Until the new plan is approved, continue implementing management actions in the Amargosa & Grimshaw Lake ACEC plans for recreation. Integrate these into the new Amargosa River ACEC & SRMA Plans. Ensure compatibility & continuity among recreation activities in the following plans: ACEC, WSR, wilderness & OSNHT.

Maintain the Amargosa River Trail through the Amargosa Canyon from Tecopa to the China Ranch. Maintain a trailhead on public land in Tecopa to provide access into the north part of the canyon. Maintain the T-post vehicle barrier built in 1973 across the south end of the canyon. Construct & maintain vehicle barriers along perimeter as needed to assist controlling vehicle access. Continue to enforce a camping closure in effect on 10,000 of public land around Tecopa. Provide appropriate signage for the area as a designated watchable wildlife site. Utilize cooperative partnerships with local resource conservation & outdoor recreation groups to assist with on-going management.

Mitigation:

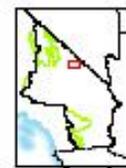
1. Maintain long distance through traffic motorized route network connectivity with roads and trails leading into and through the Amargosa SRMA.
2. Manage renewable energy development on adjacent and nearby lands to maintain dark skies.
3. Manage renewable energy development to avoid impacts to water levels in, and the outstandingly remarkable values of the Amargosa Wild and Scenic River.
4. Maintain through traffic motorized route network connectivity with roads and trails leading into and through the Amargosa SRMA.
5. Manage renewable energy development on adjacent and nearby lands to avoid traffic conflicts with visitors & permitted uses.

Amargosa/Grimshaw SRMA



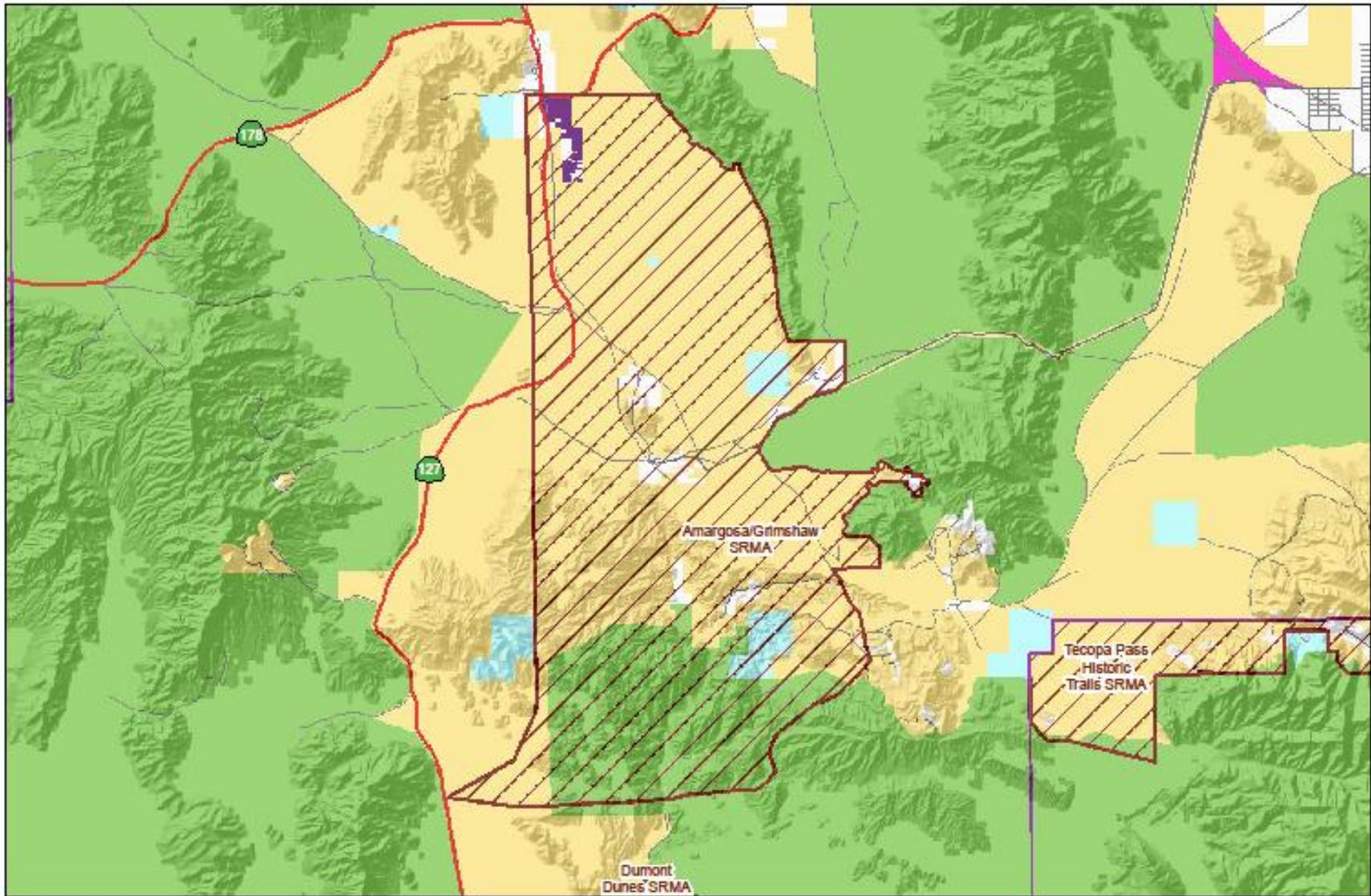
Preferred Alternative SRMAs and ERMAs
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|-------------------------------------|---------------------------|-------------|
| ACEC Layers | Land Status | GTIF |
| Proposed SRMA | Bureau of Land Management | Interstate |
| Design Focus Areas | State | US Hwy |
| OHV Areas | Other Federal | CA Hwy |
| Legislatively and Legally Protected | Military | County Hwy |
| CDCA Boundary | Private | |
| DRECP Boundary | | |
| BLM Field Office | | |
| Cities | | |



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Amargosa/Grimshaw SRMA



Alternative 1 SRMAs

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ACCEC Layers

- Proposed SRMA
- Design Focus Areas
- OHV Areas
- Legislatively and Legally Protected

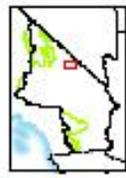
- Cities
- CDCA Boundary
- DRECP Boundary
- BLM Field Office

Land Status

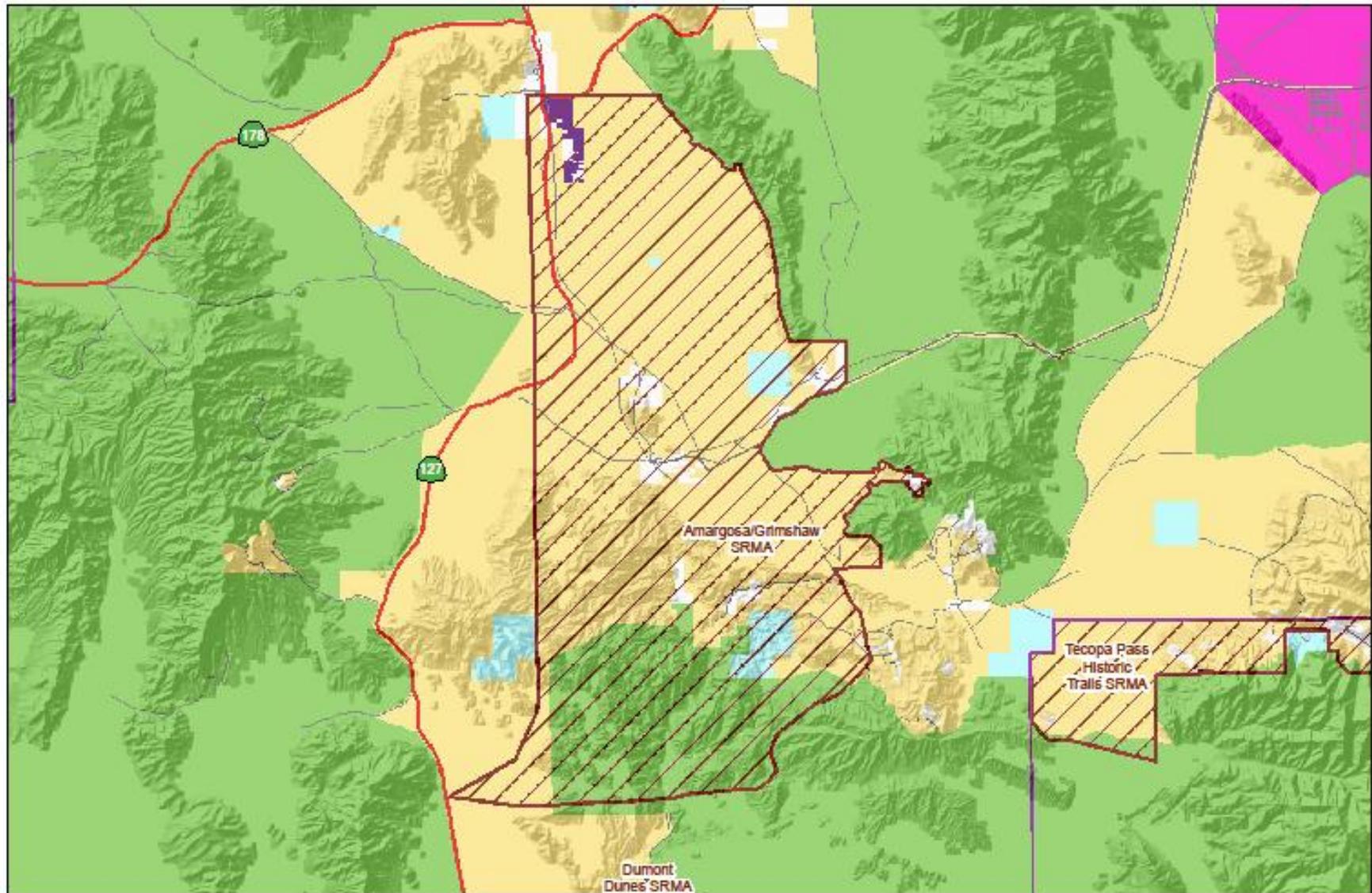
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- State
- Other Federal
- Military
- Private

GTIP

- Interstate
- US Hwy
- CA Hwy
- County Hwy



Amargosa/Grimshaw SRMA



Alternative 2 SRMAs
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ACCEC Layers

- Proposed SRMA
- Design Focus Areas
- OHV Areas
- Legislatively and Legally Protected
- Cities
- CDCA Boundary
- DRECP Boundary
- BLM Field Office

Land Status

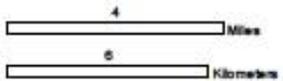
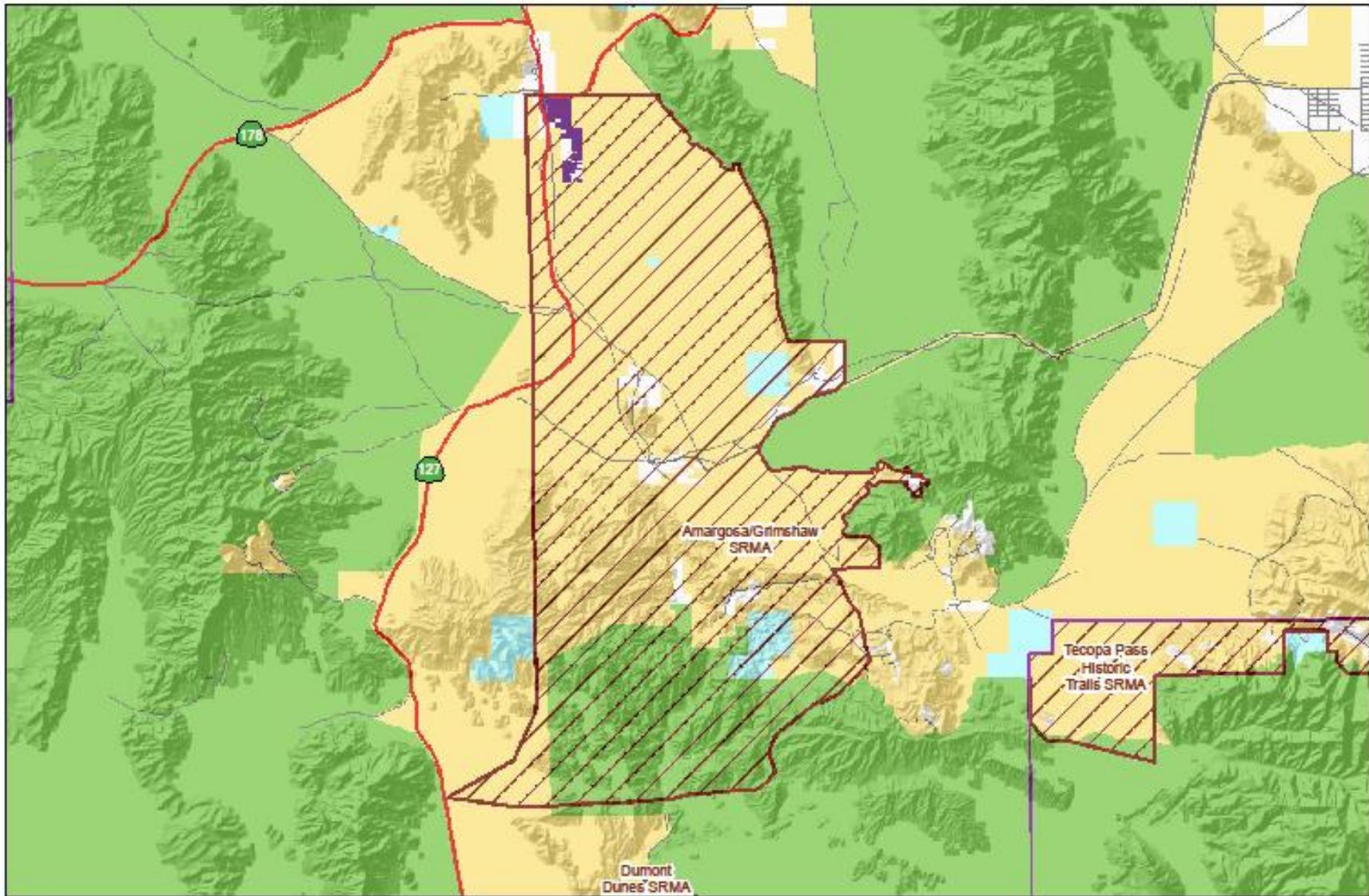
- Bureau of Land Management
- State
- Other Federal
- Military
- Private

GTIP

- Interstate
- US Hwy
- CA Hwy
- County Hwy



Amargosa/Grimshaw SRMA



Alternative 3 SRMAs

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ACEC Layers

- Proposed SRMA
- Design Focus Areas
- OHV Areas
- Legislatively and Legally Protected
- Cities
- CDCA Boundary
- DRECP Boundary
- BLM Field Office

Land Status

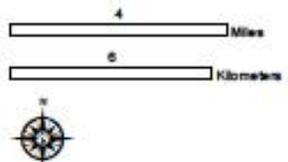
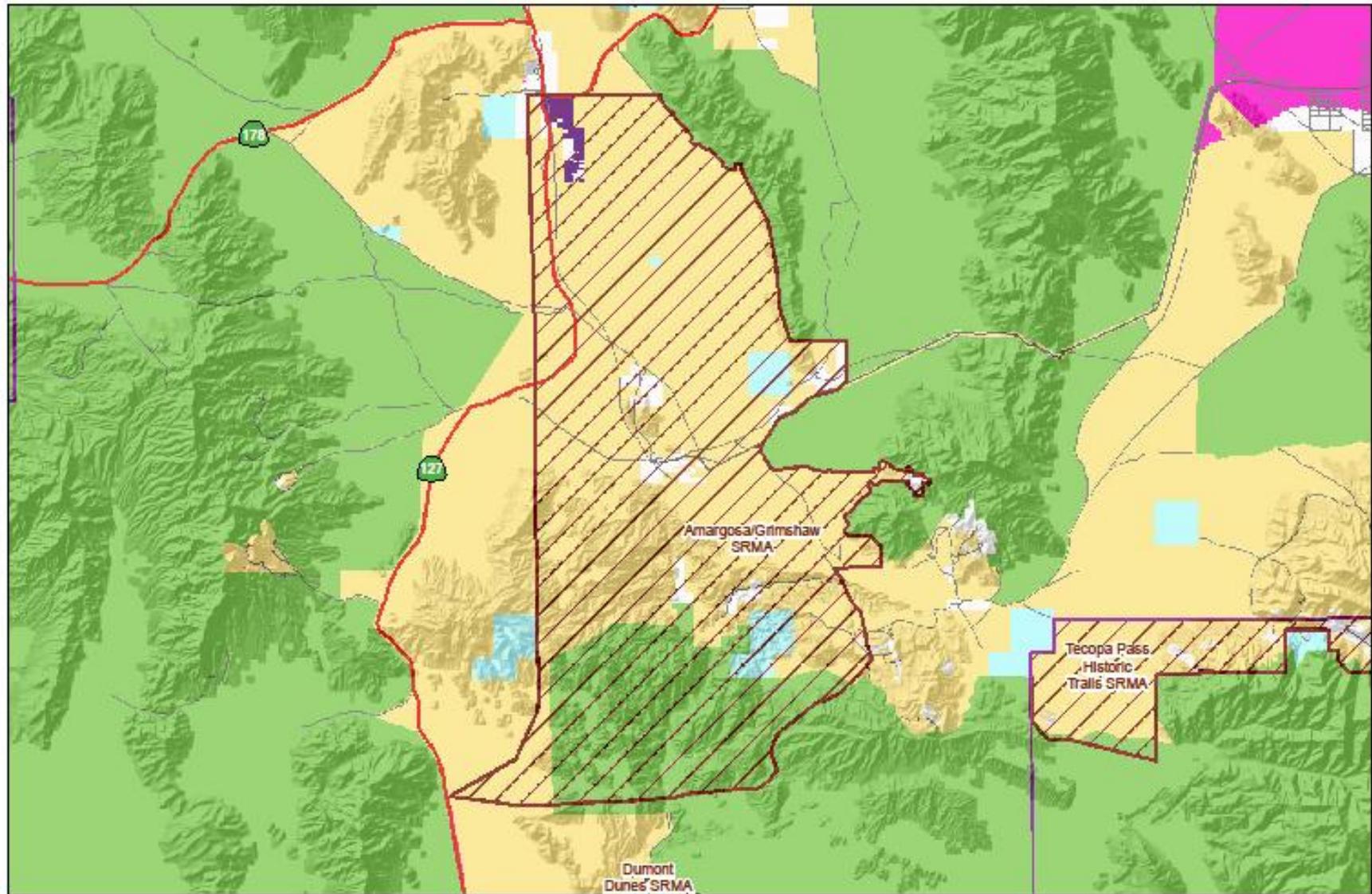
- Bureau of Land Management
- State
- Other Federal
- Military
- Private

GTIF

- Interstate
- US Hwy
- CA Hwy
- County Hwy



Amargosa/Grimshaw SRMA



Alternative 4 SRMAs

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ACBC Layers

- Proposed SRMA
- Design Focus Areas
- OHV Areas
- Legislatively and Legally Protected
- Cities
- CDCA Boundary
- DRECP Boundary
- BLM Field Office

Land Status

- Bureau of Land Management
- State
- Other Federal
- Military
- Private

GTLP

- Interstate
- US Hwy
- CA Hwy
- County Hwy

