

CALIFORNIA WILD HERITAGE CAMPAIGN

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Carrizo Gorge Wilderness Addition

(potential wilderness)

San Diego County



California Bear Republic Flag

**Critical habitat for the endangered Peninsular bighorn sheep*

**Transition plant communities -mixed chaparral and high desert scrub*

**Home to California fan palms*

** Includes upper portions of the important tributaries that run into Carrizo Creek.*

**Bureau of Land Management 6,800 acres – approx.*



Carrizo Gorge Wilderness

The Carrizo Gorge Addition includes several rugged canyons that were left out of the existing Carrizo Gorge Wilderness. Wilderness designation of these canyons will protect a biologically and geographically sensible area, preserving critical habitat for the endangered Peninsular bighorn sheep and ensuring that the existing Carrizo Gorge Wilderness maintains its wilderness character.

On its lower slopes, from

2,000 to 3,000 feet, this wildlands area consists of desert scrub typical of the upper Sonoran Desert, including agave, ocotillo, mesquite and various cacti. This plant community provides homes for phainopeplas, cactus wrens, and kangaroo rats, and good hunting grounds for red-tailed hawks. The upper slopes, from 3,000 to 4,000 feet, are covered in a mixed chaparral of scrub and coast live oaks, juniper, sugarbush and mountain mahogany.

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Protecting these diverse habitat zones, allows the waters in the canyons of Rock House, Bow Willow, Four Frogs and Jacumba Jim to drain from the high chaparral slopes down to Carrizo Creek. The current wilderness boundary cuts across these steep tributaries, protecting only the lower portion of each stream in the wilderness area but excluding the upper portions. These streams are all rugged and wild, containing stands of the native California fan palm, and numerous springs and oases.

The area provides outstanding habitat for bighorn sheep, including potential lambing areas. Bighorn scat, tracks, and beds have all been observed here. While the habitat is good, the Carrizo Gorge band is one of the most precariously balanced of all Peninsular bighorn groups, with just 19 ewes counted in 1998; everything possible must be done to protect these vanishing symbols of the desert.

Hikers and equestrians will have difficulty deciding which of these canyons to explore. Upon dropping into the head of the canyons, the adventurer is soon away from trails, roads and other modern markings. These

canyons once provided routes for the McCain family to drive their cattle to wintering grounds on the desert, and the possibility still exists for rugged equestrian adventures in the tradition of these hardy pioneers.



Access:

From the south: McCain Valley road north from the community of Boulevard. From the north: Carrizo Canyon 4WD route south from Highway S-2 in Anza-Borrego Desert State Park.

