PRINCIPLES INVOLVING HEALTH AND SAFETY OF PERSONS WITHIN WILDERNESS AREAS OF THE CALIFORNIA DESERT

I. INTRODUCTION

The Wilderness Act designates that certain Federal lands be administered to preserve their "natural condition" and to retain their wilderness character. Wilderness is an area of land remaining untrammeled and primarily affected by the forces of nature.

The Wilderness Act prohibits roads, motor vehicle use, motorized equipment, the landing of aircraft, mechanical transport, structures and installations. The Act provides, however, that the administering agency may allow these prohibited uses if they are the minimum requirement necessary for the administration of the area for the purpose of the Wilderness Act. Such measures include actions required in emergencies involving the health and safety of persons within the wilderness area. (Wilderness Act, section 4(c))

Each Federal Land Manager must decide which measures constitute the minimum requirement for emergencies involving health and safety of persons in wilderness. This annex is intended to assist managers in applying the minimum requirement to specific emergency incidents. No statement of principles can prescribe the minimum requirement for every emergency incident. (Note: emergencies involving property or livestock issues may be addressed in other annexes.)

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II. PRINCIPLES

1. Federal Land Managers may allow the use of otherwise prohibited activities. (i.e., aircraft landings, motor vehicles, motorized equipment, mechanical transport, structures, installations, or temporary roads) if such activities are the minimum requirements necessary to conduct an emergency operation involving the health and safety of persons in wilderness.

2. Federal Land Managers may allow otherwise prohibited actions to ensure not only the life, health or safety of an injured, lost, or stranded person, but also the life, health, or safety of the rescue personnel.

3. For this Annex, an emergency is generally a sudden, urgent, usually unforeseen event or set of circumstances that pose an imminent threat to human life, health or safety and that requires immediate action. What constitutes an "emergency" is ultimately determined by the Incident Commander in consultation with the Federal Land Manager.

4. Federal Land Managers should coordinate through MOUs and cooperative training sessions with federal and non-federal cooperators to ensure emergency responses for the health and safety of persons are consistent with these Principles and the 1964 Wilderness Act.

5. So that the non-Interior Incident Commanders will obtain advice concerning applicable wilderness laws, regulations and policies, the non-Interior Incident Commanders shall contact Federal Land Managers (directly through the FICC) when Search and Rescue activities are on or are suspected to be on federal wilderness. In the event contact cannot be made with the Federal Land Manager these Principles should not be viewed as an obstacle to the conduct of the emergency response in wilderness.

6. For the purposes of these Principles, searches for lost persons and the rescue of sick, injured or stranded persons may constitute emergencies. The Incident Commander and the Federal Land Managers determination of minimum requirements necessary may depend on several criteria including but not

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limited to weather, topography, mental condition, age, physical condition, preparedness and other relevant factors.

7. The choice of an emergency response methods should be commensurate to what is necessary to eliminate genuine threats to life, health or safety. (For example, it may be appropriate to walk or carry out a person with a sprained ankle in situations that are non-threatening and non-compromising to the health and safety of the injured person and rescuers.) Where there is doubt about the method of response, the benefit of doubt will go to preserving human life, health, and safety.

8. Emergency operations involving the health and safety of persons must be sensitive to wilderness designation. Emergency operations should minimize the use of motorized vehicles, mechanical transport, motorized equipment, and aircraft landing in wilderness whenever possible.

9. Recovery of an auto, airplane and personal effects that do not involve the health and safety of person, etc. is not an emergency. For this Annex, the agency, using the 4(c) provision within the Wilderness Act (...the minimum necessary for the administration of the area as wilderness...) may decide to take (especially in the case of the removal of a deceased person) actions otherwise prohibited by the 1964 Wilderness Act to effect the recovery.

10. These Principles should be incorporated within all future MOUs, agreements, and plans affecting emergencies involving the health and safety of persons within wilderness areas.

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SIGNATURES

Manager, California Desert District — DATE 1/22/97

Manager, Yuma District — DATE

Superintendent, Mojave National Preserve — DATE 1/22/97

Superintendent, Death Valley National Park — DATE 1/22/97

Superintendent, Joshua Tree National Park — DATE 1/22/97

Superintendent, Lake Mead National Rec. Area — DATE 1/22/97

~~State~~ Field Supervisor, U.S. Fish & Wildlife Service Region One — DATE 1/22/97

Lower Colorado River Complex Manager, USF&WS Region Two — DATE

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Bill Delaney — 1/22/97
Area Manager, Ridgecrest Resource Area — DATE

T B Read — 1-22-97
Area Manager, Barstow Resource Area — DATE

Rick Burns — 1/22/97
Area Manager, Needles Resource Area — DATE

Julia Dougan — 1/22/97
Area Manager, Palm Springs/South-Coast Resource Area — DATE

Larry H Reed — 1-22-97
Area Manager, El Centro Resource Area — DATE