

Application: Designated Route Signing Implementation (G.O.)

Project Description for Grants and Cooperative Agreements Program - 2010/2011

Agency: BLM - Palm Springs South Coast Field Office

1. Project Description

A. Statement of GO Activity

The Palm Springs-South Coast Field Office (PSSC FO) is responsible for the signing and maintenance of public lands, not only in rural areas but also in high-growth areas with urban interface concerns. Management and maintenance of these public lands directly influence the quality of life for the large and growing population of Southern California. Bureau of Land Management (BLM) staff, maintenance workers and technicians maintain facilities such as roads, signs, kiosks, fences and vehicle barriers. Population growth and the continuing demands for Off Highway Vehicle (OHV) recreation in Southern California has led to increased use of public lands and to OHV impacts to areas which were once backcountry regions and are now considered front country areas easily accessible by many new communities. Each year more OHV users seek out public lands not yet discovered to utilize their machines and participate in an activity they enjoy. Lands managed by the PSSC FO are comprised of designated recreational routes of travel only. The Designated Route Signing Implementation Project funds work activities for onsite visitor services and for maintenance of designated routes that are required to sustain OHV recreation opportunities.

This project will help protect cultural resources, special status species, and water quality. Marking unauthorized routes and directing OHV users to remain on designated routes will help protect the numerous cultural resources in the area. Park Technicians and Maintenance staff will monitor and maintain physical barriers to control OHV use on designated routes. Marking routes closed to areas that are sensitive to special status species, such as the desert tortoise and Bighorn sheep, and implementing seasonal closure signs will protect special status species. Marking routes closed in areas of high impact, soil disturbance and erosion will help protect water sources and quality. Park Techs will also implement the Northern & Eastern Colorado Desert Coordinated Management Plan (NECO) designated route system through signing. Steel 4x4 posts mark the intersection of all primary routes; secondary routes receive flexible carsonite signs plus immediate replacement of missing or damaged signs. Decals on both signs indicate the route is on public lands, the route name, the number, and OHMVR logo.

Park Technicians will be responsible for learning the NECO route system and the monitoring of environmental and public needs along these routes. The team will collect data from TrafX traffic counters, minimize impacts off designated routes, maintain sign/kiosks, and conduct low-level trail grooming. Trails will be groomed using a DR Power Grader purchased with OR-1-CD-373 2007 NECO Signing Equipment Grant funding. The team will also monitor campsites and measure the areas of impact. They will accompany full-time staff with public contact and compliance visits during busy holiday seasons, assisting with campfire visits to inform the public

of the unique visitor opportunities. Brochures will be developed in-house by the Recreation Planner and the GIS specialist, with maps of OHV routes.

B. Relation of Proposed Project to OHV Recreation

The Palm Springs-South Coast Field Office (PSSC FO) is responsible for the signing and maintenance of public lands, not only in rural areas but also in high-growth areas with urban interface concerns. Management and maintenance of these public lands directly influence the quality of life for the large and growing population of Southern California. Bureau of Land Management (BLM) staff, maintenance workers and technicians maintain facilities such as roads, signs, kiosks, fences and vehicle barriers. Population growth and the continuing demands for Off Highway Vehicle (OHV) recreation in Southern California has led to increased use of public lands and to OHV impacts to areas which were once backcountry regions and are now considered front country areas easily accessible by many new communities. Each year more OHV users seek out public lands not yet discovered to utilize their machines and participate in an activity they enjoy. Lands managed by the PSSC FO are comprised of designated recreational routes of travel only. The Designated Route Signing Implementation Project funds work activities for onsite visitor services and for maintenance of designated routes that are required to sustain OHV recreation opportunities.

Recreational use within conservation areas is always a challenge for any land agency. In the PSSC FO, we have developed a designated trail system in order to access the vast expanses of public lands. The Northern & Eastern Colorado Desert Coordinated Management Plan (NECO) designated trail system encourages the recreational opportunity of viewing these unique points of interest. Many of the designated routes are historic military roads, prospector trails, and stagecoach lines. Other designated routes run parallel to the original routes.

The goal of the PSSC FO OHV Program is to enhance recreational opportunities on public lands and decrease OHV use occurring off designated routes of travel. The maintenance of authorized OHV recreational roads and trails will enhance OHV riding opportunities, preventing the possibility of temporary closure to OHV activities.

C. Describe the size of the specific Project Area(s) in acres and/or miles

The Palm Springs-South Coast Field Office (PSSC FO) extends from the Colorado River to the Pacific Ocean and south to the Mexican border, encompassing some 1.65 million acres of BLM-managed public lands. These public lands are adjacent to California's most densely populated urban areas and include all BLM-managed land in all of Riverside County and in portions of Los Angeles, San Bernardino, and San Diego counties.

D. Location and description of OHV opportunities

Funding for this grant would support signing, maintenance, and grooming of the primary and secondary routes within the following land-use plan areas:

The Northern & Eastern Colorado Desert Coordinated Management Plan (NECO) deals with lands extending from the Coachella Valley continuing to the edge of the California Desert District near the Colorado River. Within the land plan, approximately 1,500 miles of trail systems are available for recreational use. The Meccacopia Special Recreation Area is located within this region. Its unique mixture of stunning landscapes, tectonic formations, and specialized plant and animal life draw large numbers of visitors to the area each year. The location offers ideal camping and OHV touring opportunities. The area receives its heaviest use during the winter holiday seasons, and at that time additional OHV patrols are brought in to conduct increased safety and compliance checks.

The California Desert Conservation Area Plan Amendment for the Coachella Valley (CDCA-CV) and adjacent areas are parcels of public lands heavily fragmented by privately owned sections. Though many designated routes within the immediate valley are no more than one mile in length, longer segments are located to the east end of valley near the interface with the NECO plan. Recreation and Law Enforcement staffs work closely with the Coachella Valley Association of Governments OHV Task Force, which partners with other agencies to ensure that Off-Highway Vehicles operate only in those areas designated for use, and to prevent conflict between users. Signing of these areas, public outreach, and compliance monitoring are extremely important within the Coachella Valley.

2. Rerouting Requirements

A. Does your project involve rerouting of any roads and trails? NO

If response to question (A) is 'Yes', a Project timeline, conceptual drawings and site plans are required (See 'Attachments' tab at the top of the screen)

If response to question (A) is 'No', skip details related to rerouting