

Bureau of  
Land Management

Imperial  
Sand Dunes  
Recreation Area



## Information Listings

### Police, Fire, Ambulance—911

**Emergency Medical Services**  
Pioneers Memorial Hospital (760) 351-3333  
El Centro Regional Medical Center (760) 339-7100  
Yuma Regional Medical Center (928) 344-2000  
Desert Regional Medical Center (760) 323-6511

**Bureau of Land Management**  
Cahuilla Ranger Station (760) 356-2721  
Buttercup Ranger Station (760) 572-2220  
El Centro Field Office (760) 337-4400

**Imperial County**  
Sheriff's Office (800) 452-2051  
Jail, Prisoner Information (442) 265-2220  
ICSO OHV Enforcement Team (442) 265-2105

**California Highway Patrol**  
El Centro Dispatch Center (760) 482-2505  
Local Road Conditions (800) 427-7623

**Border Patrol** (800) 901-2003

**Bureau of Land Management**  
El Centro Field Office  
1661 S. 4th St.  
El Centro, CA 92243  
[www.blm.gov/visit/imperial-sand-dunes](http://www.blm.gov/visit/imperial-sand-dunes)  
[www.facebook.com/BLMImperialSandDunes](https://www.facebook.com/BLMImperialSandDunes)



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## In An Emergency Call 911

**Injured Person**  
It is usually best not to transport an injured person from an accident scene before medical personnel arrive. Moving a victim improperly can make an injury worse. **Call 911.** If possible, tell the dispatcher your Global Positioning System (GPS) coordinates, as they are extremely useful in locating the victim quickly.

**BLM Ranger Stations**  
Cahuilla Ranger Station is located near Highway 78 on Gecko Road. Buttercup Ranger Station is located on Grays Well Road off Interstate 8. Both stations are open from October through late spring, depending on staffing and weather conditions, with varying hours. Maps, brochures, and first aid assistance are available here.

# Welcome

Welcome to the Imperial Sand Dunes (ISD) Recreation Area, the largest mass of sand dunes in California. Formed by windblown sands of ancient Lake Cahuilla, the dune system extends for more than 40 miles in a band averaging 5 miles wide. Dunes often reach heights of 300 feet above the desert floor, providing outstanding opportunities for recreation. A favorite destination among off-highway vehicle (OHV) enthusiasts, the dunes also offer fabulous scenery, opportunities for solitude, and a home to rare plants and animals.

With most of the off-road action taking place in the recreation area south of Highway 78, the open areas allow all types of vehicle recreation. The limited areas surrounding the dunes may have street legal requirements and require vehicles to travel only on designated routes. Closed areas prohibit motorized vehicle use entirely. Information and maps for all of these areas are available at the ranger stations.

The North Algodones Dunes Wilderness offers a tranquil alternative to the fast-paced action of the main dunes. Located north of Highway 78, it is off limits to all vehicles and mechanized use, but access by foot or horse affords excellent hiking, photography, and wildlife viewing.



# Vehicle and Camping Closures

Vehicle and camping closures are in effect to conserve the habitat of several plant and animal species found within the dunes, including Peirson's milk-vetch, which is listed as threatened under the Endangered Species Act.

Closures are located in the Mammoth Wash area, the southwestern central portion, and near the Mexican border. Motorized travel is not permitted within the closure boundaries. These closures are marked with posts and "No Motorized Vehicles" signs.

A camping closure is located on the eastern edge of the dunes between Washes 33 and 70. While camping is not allowed within this closure, it is open to motorized travel. This closure is marked with posts and "No Camping" signs.



# Recreation Fees

Permits are required from October 1 through April 15 each year. If purchased before arriving at the ISD, permits cost \$35 per week. Permits purchased at the dunes (onsite) cost \$50 per week. The season permit costs \$150 and is valid October 1 through April 15 each year.

Information on how to purchase your permit online or before your arrival is available at [www.blm.gov/visit/imperial-sand-dunes](http://www.blm.gov/visit/imperial-sand-dunes). For each weekly or seasonal permit purchased online, a second weekly permit may be purchased for \$25 (a \$10 discount) and used for any weekly timeframe.

# Border Safety

The southernmost boundary of the sand dunes in the Buttercup area shares an international border with Mexico. The construction of the border fence by the U.S. Border Patrol makes this boundary quite apparent. Please remain at least 100 feet away from the fence, as this will make patrol easier for border agents and help ensure your safety.

Despite the fence, illegal activity may still occur along the border, and your safety may be at risk. Always be aware of your surroundings when you are recreating in this area. Report any suspicious or illegal activity to the BLM dispatch center at (909) 383-5651. Direct reports of illegal aliens to the U.S. Border Patrol at (800) 901-2003.

# Desert Tortoise

The desert tortoise (*Gopherus agassizii*) is a seldom seen inhabitant of the desert. The tortoise's potential habitat range extends east from the microphyll woodland, which borders the east side of the dunes. If you find a tortoise in the desert, respect its privacy and space. You may take pictures and observe it, but do not touch or harass the animal. If you find a dead or live tortoise, don't collect it. Call the wildlife biologist at BLM's El Centro Field Office at (760) 337-4400 to report the general location, GPS coordinates (if available), your contact information, and whether the tortoise was alive or dead. Report any vandalism, harassment, or collecting to the El Centro Field Office or the California Department of Fish and Wildlife's CalTIP number: (888) 334-2258.



## Desert Advisory Committee Subgroup

The ISD subgroup operates under the authority of the California Desert Advisory Committee and provides input to the BLM regarding issues pertinent to the ISD. Members represent OHV interests and the local communities. For more information, visit <https://www.blm.gov/get-involved/rac/california/california-desert-district>.

# State of California Off-Highway Vehicle Laws

This section does not address all California OHV laws. Please remember, it is your responsibility to know the laws. Visit <http://ohv.parks.ca.gov> for more information. (Note: CVC denotes California Vehicle Code.)

### Recreational Off-Highway Vehicle (ROV) Laws.

- A person operating an ROV shall be at least 16 years of age or be directly supervised in the vehicle by a parent or guardian or by an adult authorized by a parent or guardian (CVC 38600).
- Safety helmets are required for operators and passengers of ROVs (CVC 38601).
- A seatbelt and shoulder belt or safety harness are required to be worn when an ROV is in motion (CVC 38602).
- Passengers must be seated in a location designed and provided by the manufacturer in an ROV with a model year of 2014 or later (CVC 38603(a)).
- Passengers in ROVs must be able to grasp the handhold while properly restrained with their back against the seatback (CVC 38604(a)).

**Ability to Reach and Operate Controls.** The operator of an off-highway motor vehicle shall be able to reach and operate all controls necessary to safely operate the vehicle (CVC 38304).

**Ability to Reach and Operate Controls: Persons Under 14.** A parent, guardian, or supervisor will not allow a child under 14 years of age to operate an OHV in a manner that violates CVC 38304 (CVC 38304.1(a)).

**OHVs on Roadways.** No person shall operate or drive an OHV on a roadway, except to cross at an angle of approximately 90 degrees and in a quick and safe manner (CVC 38025(a)).

**Helmet Usage.** All-terrain vehicle (ATV) riders must wear an approved safety helmet (CVC 38505).

**Required Rider Safety Training.** No person under 18 years of age shall operate an ATV unless he or she has taken a certified safety course or is under the direct supervision of an adult who has the appropriate safety certification in his or her possession (CVC 38503). Contact the ATV Safety Institute at (800) 887-2887 or [www.atvsafety.org](http://www.atvsafety.org).

**Parental Supervision.** No person under 14 years of age shall operate an ATV unless they meet conditions of CVC 38503 and are accompanied and supervised by a parent or guardian or an adult authorized by a parent or guardian (CVC 38504). No parent or guardian or an adult authorized by a parent or guardian shall grant permission or knowingly allow that child to operate an ATV in violation of CVC 38504 (CVC 38504.1).

**Noise Restrictions.** OHV noise emissions shall be limited to not more than 96 dBA if manufactured on or after January 1, 1986, and not more than 101 dBA if manufactured prior to January 1, 1986 (CVC 38370(h)(1)). Visit <http://ohv.parks.ca.gov> for more information.

**Carrying Passengers.** ATV operators may not carry a passenger while operating on public lands, unless the ATV is designed for a passenger (CVC 38506).

**Driving Under the Influence.** It is unlawful for any person to drive a vehicle while under the influence of an alcoholic beverage or any drug or both (applies anywhere) (CVC 23152(a)). Driving on or off roads with a suspended or revoked driver's license status is against the law (CVC 14601).

### Speed Laws.

- Basic speed law: Don't operate an OHV faster than is safe for conditions (CVC 38305).
- Prima Facie Speed Limit: The speed limit is 15 mph within 50 feet of campgrounds, campsites, or concentrations of people or animals (CVC 38310).

### Registration.

- Vehicles operated on federal and state highways; county roads; or the BLM's Gecko, Wash, Dune Buggy Flats, and Grays Well Roads must be licensed for highway use (CVC 4000(a)).
- OHVs owned by California residents must be registered with the California Department of Motor Vehicles and properly display a valid Green Sticker or Red Sticker Vehicle Identification Tag (CVC 38020, 38010) on the vehicle (CVC 38310).
- OHVs that do not have a valid registration or permit from the owner's home state (including Mexico and Canada) will be required to purchase a California nonresident permit (sticker) through selected vendors in California, Nevada, and Arizona. Permits may also be purchased from California State Parks, 916-324-4442 (CVC 38020). States that do not have an off-highway vehicle registration program are: Alabama, Alaska, Florida, Georgia, Hawaii, Illinois, Kansas, Kentucky, Mississippi, Nebraska, North Carolina, South Carolina, South Dakota, Tennessee, Virginia, and West Virginia.

**Required Equipment.** Any OHV must be equipped with an approved muffler, brakes, and spark arrestor. A headlight and at least one red tail light are required for operation at night (CVC 38335, 38345).

**Environmental Damage.** No person shall operate an OHV in a manner likely to cause environmental damage (CVC 38319).

**Use of Red and Blue Lights and Sirens.** A person driving an OHV shall not use a siren or display a flashing or steady burning red or blue warning light (CVC 38346, 38375).

# ISD Rules and Regulations

These rules apply to public lands within the ISD, but this brochure does not address all ISD laws. Please remember, it is your responsibility to know the law. If you have questions, please see a ranger or visit [www.blm.gov/visit/imperial-sand-dunes/rules-and-regulations](http://www.blm.gov/visit/imperial-sand-dunes/rules-and-regulations).

**Recreation Permit.** A permit is required for all primary street legal vehicles used for transportation to the recreation site. Upon arrival to the ISD, permits must be purchased and properly displayed in/on the windshield. Permits are nonrefundable and nontransferable.

**Saving Spaces.** Saving and/or reserving a camping space is prohibited.

**Safety Flags.** OHVs shall be equipped with a whip mast and a 6- x 12-inch red/orange flag. Masts must be mounted on the vehicle and extend 8 feet from the ground to the mast tip.

**Fires.** Burning potentially hazardous materials, including, but not limited to, gas, oil, plastic, and magnesium, is prohibited. A permit is required for campfires. Check current fire restrictions at <https://www.blm.gov/programs/public-safety-and-fire/fire-and-aviation/regional-info/california/fire-restrictions>.

**Wood Pallets.** Firewood materials containing nails, screws, or other metal hardware are prohibited.

**Glass Beverage Containers.** Possession of glass beverage containers is prohibited.

**Alcoholic Beverages.** It is prohibited to drink or possess alcoholic beverages, including open containers, while operating a motor vehicle or OHV. No person under 21 years of age shall be in possession of alcoholic beverages.

**Quiet Hours.** No person shall operate or use any audio or motorized equipment (including generators) between the hours of 10 p.m. and 6 a.m.

**Organized Group Activities and Events.** Visitors may not stage, carry out, participate in, or sponsor an organized event or activity without written authorization from the BLM.

**Riding in Pickup Beds.** No person shall ride in the bed of a pickup truck.

**Aircraft.** Takeoffs and landings of aircraft, including ultralights, are prohibited within 1 mile of Gecko Road.

**Camping Limit.** A 14-day camping limit is in effect in the ISD.

**Public Nudity.** Public nudity is prohibited.

**Firearms/Fireworks.** On developed recreation sites and areas, it is unlawful to discharge or use firearms, fireworks, or other weapons (43 CFR 8365.2-5(a)).

**Parking.** Parking or camping is not permitted within 10 feet of pavement on Gecko Road.

**Pets.** On developed recreation sites and areas, animals must be kept on a leash not longer than 6 feet and secured to a fixed object or under the control of a person or otherwise physically restricted at all times (43 CFR 8365.2-1(c)).

**Sewage.** Dumping sewage is prohibited (43 CFR 8365.1-1(b)(3)).

Any person who violates any of these supplementary rules may be tried before a United States magistrate and fined in accordance with 18 U.S.C. 3571, imprisoned no more than 12 months under 43 U.S.C. 1733(a) and 43 CFR 8360.0-7, or both. In accordance with 43 CFR 8365.1-7, state or local officials may also impose penalties for violations of California law.

Such violations may also be subject to the enhanced fines provided for by 18 U.S.C. 3571. Those who violate these rules may also be subject to civil action for unauthorized use of public lands; violations of special recreation permit terms, conditions, or stipulations; or for uses beyond those allowed by the permit under 43 CFR 2932.57(b)(3).

Peirson's Milk-Vetch



Small fuzzy leaves and big seeds characterize Peirson's milk-vetch, a silvery perennial at the root of the dunes' critical habitat closures. Found only here and on some dunes in Mexico's Gran Desierto de Altar, its sturdy taproot keeps it anchored in the sand. Germinating when rains are plentiful, pretty purple flowers in March or April attract a digger bee, the plant's only known pollinator. And those big seeds aren't just for show; extra nutrients within help the seedling emerge from damp sand—a unique desert adaptation for survival in a shifting landscape. Because it is a federally listed threatened species, critical habitat for Peirson's milk-vetch is closed to OHV use.

Campground Information

North Dunes Campgrounds	Latitude and Longitude World Geodetic System (WGS 84)	Description
Mammoth Wash	33° 07.782' N 115° 16.487' W	nonmaintained, gravel surface
Cement Flats	32° 58.482' N 115° 10.589' W	gravel surface, toilet
Palo Verde Flats	32° 59.649' N 115° 05.422' W	nonmaintained, gravel surface
Gecko Loop	32° 56.383' N 115° 08.566' W	paved road, toilets
Glamis Flats	32° 59.533' N 115° 04.749' W	gravel surface, toilets
Keyhole	32° 54.940' N 115° 06.986' W	paved road
Osborne Overlook	32° 58.982' N 115° 07.974' W	nonmaintained, gravel surface, toilets
Pad 1	32° 58.080' N 115° 10.280' W	gravel surface
Pad 1.5	32° 57.633' N 115° 10.083' W	gravel surface
Pad 2	32° 57.342' N 115° 09.729' W	gravel surface
Pad 2.5	32° 56.697' N 115° 08.792' W	gravel surface
Pad 3	32° 56.071' N 115° 08.171' W	gravel surface
Pad 4	32° 55.434' N 115° 07.292' W	gravel surface
Pad 5	32° 55.950' N 115° 08.133' W	gravel surface
Roadrunner	32° 54.750' N 115° 07.066' W	paved sites, toilets
Wash 4	32° 59.448' N 115° 03.691' W	nonmaintained, gravel surface, toilets
Wash 6	32° 59.286' N 115° 03.420' W	nonmaintained, gravel surface, toilets
Wash 10	32° 58.823' N 115° 02.761' W	nonmaintained, gravel surface, toilets
Wash 20	32° 57.291' N 115° 00.841' W	nonmaintained, gravel surface

South Dunes Campgrounds		
Buttercup	32° 44.336' N 114° 52.708' W	paved road, toilets, dumpsters
Dune Buggy Flats	32° 42.817' N 114° 56.550' W	nonmaintained, gravel surface, dumpsters, toilets
Dunes Vista	32° 45.833' N 114° 50.233' W	nonmaintained, gravel surface
Grays Well	32° 42.626' N 114° 55.490' W	paved access road, toilets
Midway	32° 43.284' N 114° 54.796' W	paved road, toilets
Ogilby	32° 48.650' N 114° 53.333' W	nonmaintained, gravel surface

Sand Dune and Ranger Station Information

Suggested OHV skill level: ◆ Advanced ■ Intermediate ● Beginner

North Dunes Places of Interest			
Location	Lat & Long	Location	Lat & Long
Cahuilla Ranger Station	32° 58.400' N 115° 10.383' W	Hill 4 Lizard	32° 55.676' N 115° 04.084' W
Hill 1	32° 59.052' N 115° 07.651' W	Hill 5 China Wall	32° 54.705' N 115° 02.452' W
Competition Hill #1	32° 57.767' N 115° 05.933' W	Hill 6 The Wall	32° 53.390' N 115° 02.481' W
Hill 2 Oldsmobile	32° 56.652' N 115° 04.795' W	Hill 7 The Ceiling	32° 52.506' N 115° 00.986' W
Hill 3 Brawley Slide			

South Dunes Places of Interest			
Location	Lat & Long	Location	Lat & Long
Buttercup Ranger Station	32° 44.313' N 114° 53.102' W	Patton Valley	32° 46.833' N 114° 56.883' W
Buttercup Valley	32° 43.800' N 114° 53.005' W	Plank Road	32° 42.617' N 114° 56.350' W
Competition Hill	32° 43.867' N 114° 52.983' W	Test Hill	32° 44.285' N 114° 53.853' W
Herman	32° 42.322' N 114° 57.433' W		
Schneider Bridge			

Places of Interest

- 1

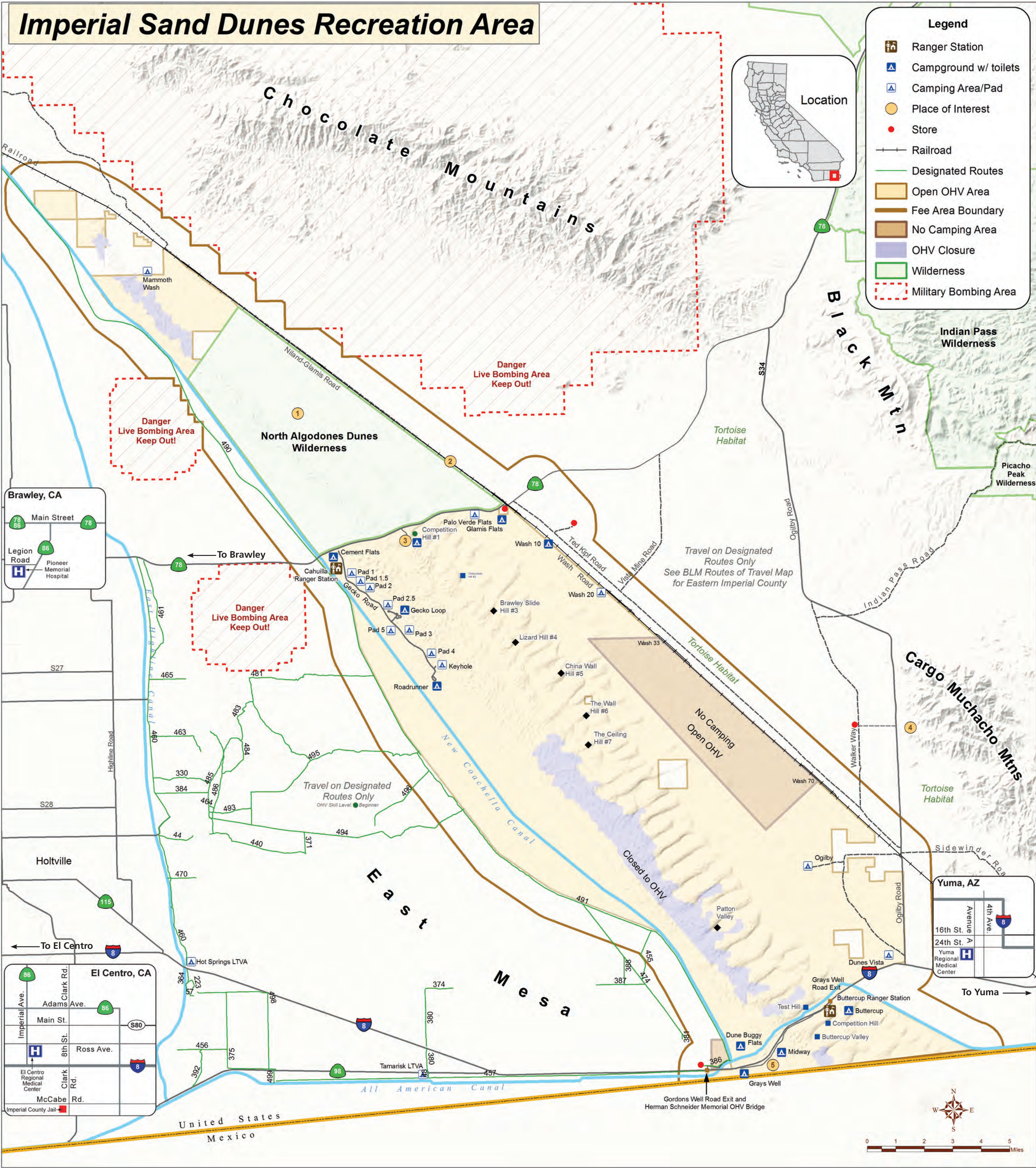
**North Algodones Wilderness Area** - This wilderness area encompasses more than 26,000 acres, with the largest and tallest dunes located in the central area and on the west side. The east side contains smaller dunes and numerous washes. Visitors are welcome to walk or ride horses in this remote area. The wilderness is closed to all vehicles and mechanized use.
- 2

**Watchable Wildlife Site** - A parking area with access to the wilderness area. Discover a variety of plant and animal species.
- 3

**Osborne Overlook** - A roadside overlook that offers scenic views of the sand dunes and the Imperial Valley. (OHV and street access)
- 4

**Tumco** - A self-guided walking tour takes you through the historic mining town of Tumco (formerly Hedges, renamed in 1910 for The United Mines Company). Little remains of this once-bustling community except for crumbling foundations, a reservoir, and a cemetery. The townsite is closed to camping and vehicle travel. Beware of open mine shafts and weak support timbers! (Vehicle access to parking area only—please stay on trails.)
- 5

**Plank Road** - A small, surviving remnant of the unique “floating” wooden road built across the dunes in 1915. The Plank Road was used for 10 years before being replaced by a paved highway in 1926. Please help preserve this historic road by keeping vehicles outside the protective fence. (OHV and street access)



Medical Assistance



**Pioneers Memorial Hospital,**  
207 West Legion Road, Brawley, CA  
From Glamis, take Hwy 78 west into Brawley. Turn left onto Hwy 86 south (McDonald's restaurant on corner). Turn right onto Legion Road.

**El Centro Regional Medical Center,**  
1415 Ross Avenue, El Centro, CA  
From Glamis, take Hwy 78 west. Turn left onto Hwy 115 south. Turn right onto S80 Evan Hewes Hwy west. Turn left onto Hwy 111 south. Take Interstate 8 west to the Imperial Avenue off-ramp. Take Imperial Avenue north to Ross Avenue. Turn right onto Ross Avenue.

**Yuma Regional Medical Center,**  
2400 S. Avenue A, Yuma, AZ  
Take Interstate 8 east across the Colorado River to the 16th Street off-ramp. Turn right onto 16th Street. Turn left onto Avenue A until 24th Street.

**Desert Regional Medical Center,**  
1150 N. Indian Canyon Drive, Palm Springs, CA  
From Glamis: Take Hwy 78 west (toward Brawley) to Highway 111 north. Turn right onto Highway 111 north, and follow it to North 86. Follow North 86 until it merges to Interstate 10 west. From I-10, take the Indian Canyon Drive exit, and turn left. From South Dunes: Take Interstate 8 west (toward El Centro), and exit Highway 111 north via exit 118B (toward Indio). Follow Highway 111 north to North 86, and turn right. Follow North 86 until it merges to Interstate 10 west. From I-10, take the Indian Canyon Drive exit, and turn left.

**Imperial County Sheriff's Office,**  
328 Applestill Road, El Centro, CA  
From Glamis, take Hwy 78 west. Turn left onto Hwy 115 south. Turn right onto S80 Evan Hewes Hwy west. Turn left onto Hwy 111 south. Take Interstate 8 west to the 4th Street exit. Turn left on 4th Street, heading south. Turn right onto McCabe Road. Turn left on Clark Road. Turn right on Applestill Road.

GEOREFERENCED MAPS

Heading out for a remote adventure? No cell coverage? No problem. The BLM has developed georeferenced maps compatible with any georeferenced map mobile application.

These PDF maps are designed for use on your GPS-enabled mobile device and can be displayed on any PDF reader. When viewed in an installed mobile map application, each map is designed so that your location can be displayed on screen in real time.

Georeferenced map applications allow you to navigate using your mobile device's GPS, even without cellular reception. There are a variety of georeferenced PDF apps available for Apple and Android devices. Consult the mobile app for complete instructions. For additional information, go to <https://www.blm.gov/maps/georeferenced-PDFs>. To download this map, select California, then Routes of Travel for Imperial Sand Dunes Recreation Area.

The mention of company names, trade names, or commercial products does not constitute endorsement or recommendation for use by the Federal Government.

Dust kicked up into the atmosphere allows you to ride off into a spectacular sunset. But dust hanging around camping areas or places where people gather just chokes the scene.

Slow Down!

Keep the dust down near camps, access roads, and groups of people.

The speed limit is 15 mph within 50 feet of camps and people.

CVC 38310



- 30

Years
- Travel responsibly
  - Respect the rights of others
  - Educate yourself
  - Avoid sensitive areas
  - Do your part