

Bureau of Land Management
Quarterly Report
March 30, 2016

1. Route Monitoring and Compliance

a. Monitoring Compliance with Route Closures at a Statistically Significant Level – Update from December 2015 Quarterly Report

Pursuant to the Protocol Monitoring Plan, for Year 3 of the first 3-year monitoring cycle commencing August 2013, BLM completed field inspection and data recordation on 32 miles of field sample routes. Table 1 lists the routes field-monitored since August 2015.

Table 1. Routes Field Monitored for Year 3							
Subregion	Routes Monitored						
Joshua Tree	JT1905	JT1951	JT1988				
Juniper Flats	JF3130	JF3131	JF3153	JF3253	JF3383		
North Searles	P6						
Rattlesnake Canyon	RC2207	RC2248	RC2328	RC2401	RC3225	RC3423	RC3465
Sierra	SE120	SE997					

b. Summary of Monitoring/Enforcement Effort – Update from December 2015 Quarterly Report

BLM law enforcement (LE) Rangers conducted 286 compliance checks (*e.g.*, wilderness, Area of Critical Environmental Concern, cultural sites) and 228 enforcement contacts within the West Mojave planning area. Of these 228 enforcement contacts, 143 pertained directly to off-route (43 CFR 8341.1(b)), closed area (43 CFR 8341.1(c), CA VC 38301(b)), wilderness (43 CFR 6302.20(d)), National Scenic Trail (43 CFR 8351.1-1(a)), or other motor vehicle violations. Written reports were prepared for some of these violations as part of the Incident Management and Response System (IMARS) in support of pending investigations. Table 2 provides an overview of LE actions by patrol sector within the West Mojave planning area.

Table 2. Overview Of Law Enforcement Actions By Patrol Sector Within The West Mojave Planning Area Since December 2015 Quarterly Report					
Patrol Sector	Compliance Checks	Federal Violation Notice	State/Local Citation	Written Warning	Written Report Filed
<i>Barstow</i>					
81	0	19	0	10	3
82	2	5	0	4	0
83	11	26	0	30	4
84	0	0	0	0	0
85	0	0	0	0	0
86	4	0	0	0	0
<i>Ridgecrest</i>					
1	1	0	0	0	5
2	0	0	0	0	0
3	46	0	0	14	8
4	36	3	0	0	5
5	55	0	0	2	3
6	105	0	12	47	25
7	12	0	0	0	2
<i>Needles</i>					
92	0	0	0	0	0
<i>Palm Springs</i>					
2	14	0	0	1	0
TOTAL	286	53	12	108	55

c. Maintenance and Restoration Actions – Update from December 2015 Quarterly Report

During this last quarter, heavy equipment route maintenance was performed at Fossil Falls trailhead and campground loop roads, Little Lake overlook interpretive site, gas line road from Red Mountain to the Spangler Hills Off-Highway Vehicle (OHV) Area, and portions of Boone Road accessing the Johnson Valley OHV Recreation Area.

BLM staff installed management area identification signs within the Jawbone-Butterbredt Area of Critical Environmental Concern, Spangler Hills OHV Area, and Jawbone Canyon OHV Area.

Cultural resource inventories were completed in the Red Mountain, Rand and Fremont Peak Subregions at proposed restoration sites.

A Park Ranger and a Visitor Use Monitoring and Restoration Fellow were hired in January 2016 and are conducting visitor contacts, maintaining informational signs, repairing barrier fencing,

installing route signs, monitoring recreation use, and working with volunteers in the Juniper Flats Subregion.

During this last quarter, a volunteer subgroup of the Juniper Flats Working Group (JFWG) held four work-days. The work completed included installation of 90 route signs, barrier fence repair at 11 sites, informational sign maintenance, and training on the use of tablets to gather data including documentation of incursions.

The Transition Habitat Conservancy (THC) restored 125 incursion sites in desert tortoise critical habitat on BLM managed lands and adjacent private lands located in the Fremont Peak Subregion.

The Friends of Jawbone staff continues to perform daily monitoring and rehabilitation of unauthorized routes on BLM-managed lands within the Jawbone Subregion, as well as ground operation and maintenance work, including signing, grading roads, and repairing structures that have been vandalized.

2. Kiosks – Update from December 2015 Quarterly Report

BLM continued to perform regular and ongoing maintenance of the information kiosks in the Sierra, Darwin, North Searles, South Searles, Fremont Peak, and Juniper Flats Subregions during this last quarter. These efforts included the replacement of Subregion maps, posting of notices, painting, plexiglass replacement, and placement of “You Are Here” stickers on the Subregion maps. BLM also installed new educational messaging about the ongoing restoration project at four kiosks within the Juniper Flats Subregion.

3. Status of Planning – Update from December 2015 Quarterly Report

The re-opened public comment period for the West Mojave Route Network Project Draft Land Use Plan Amendment/Supplemental Environmental Impact Statement (LUPA/SEIS) closed on January 25, 2016 (80 FR 57862, Friday, September 25, 2015). BLM received an additional 286 comment letters.

A preliminary summary of the comments is included here. Most comments reiterated concerns raised in the initial public comment period or addressed additional specific or area route designations and route alternatives. BLM received about 3,500 additional route-specific comments, which it is continuing to review and process. Most of these comments address the same categories of concerns as previous comments, including requests that routes be closed based on a resource issue, or that routes be opened to improve access. Most of the additional commenters requested that routes be closed or limited to use by street-legal vehicles.

Only a few comments addressed Plan Amendment elements, and most of these are from people who previously commented and raised the same issues.

Additional comments were received that: (1) requested BLM to circulate a new Supplemental Draft EIS to incorporate changes to the range of alternatives that are likely once the Record of Decision for the Desert Renewable Energy Conservation Plan is issued; (2) opposed closing established routes based on the assumption that closing routes will prevent off-route damage that is currently being caused by off-highway vehicles; (3) objected to the Section 106 Programmatic Agreement not being available for public comment during the public comment period on the Draft SEIS; and (4) expressed support or concern about adjustments to the West Mojave Route Network Project that may result from the issuance of the Desert Renewable Energy Conservation Plan Record of Decision.

BLM initiated its first meeting for the implementation of the National Historic Preservation Act Section 106 Programmatic Agreement (PA) that was signed last summer. BLM hosted its first meeting on January 27, 2016 with California State Historic Preservation Office, Advisory Council on Historic Preservation, tribal entities, and other signatories and interested parties to the PA, to develop the Historic Properties Management Plan. A working group meeting is scheduled to occur next month, followed by two additional meetings this year.

BLM also continues field-testing of the archaeological resources Sensitivity Model using field crews to gather on-the-ground inventory data to cycle back into the model. In fiscal year 2016, cultural resource inventory crews have surveyed 2,466 acres (68 linear miles) of previously unsurveyed routes and identified 67 occurrences of cultural resources, including 50 archaeological sites and 17 isolated artifacts.

BLM continues to coordinate with local, state and federal agencies on cross-jurisdictional issues and to compile data on OHV and other disturbances in the West Mojave planning area.

4. Chronology of Management Actions – Update from December 2015 Quarterly Report

January 13, 2016: BLM hosted a meeting with the County of San Bernardino, Department of Public Works, to discuss strategies to address transportation maintenance activities, access needs, and strategies to prevent inadvertent removal of BLM route signage near County-maintained roads.

January 14, 2016: BLM conducted desert tortoise awareness training for restoration crews working in the Fremont Peak Subregion.

January 15-17, 2016: BLM and the Transition Habitat Conservancy (THC) hosted an education outreach event in the Fremont Project area. BLM also participated on a field trip with THC and a representative from the California Department of Parks and Recreation, Off-Highway Motorized Vehicle Recreation Division, to discuss ongoing and planned restoration activities.

January 27, 2016: BLM hosted a National Historic Preservation Act Section 106 Programmatic Agreement implementation meeting in Barstow, CA. The purpose of the meeting was to begin the development of the Historic Properties Management Plan.

February 9, 2016: BLM hosted a meeting with the United States Forest Service (USFS) to coordinate activities and OHV management strategies in the Juniper Flats Subregion and adjacent USFS lands.

February 12, 2016: BLM hosted a Question and Answer session with representatives of the Ord Mountain range allotment, the Johnson Valley Municipal Advisory Council (MAC), and the Lucerne Valley MAC, as well as residents in the vicinity of Juniper Flats, concerning the status of the West Mojave Route Network Project planning and issues related to travel management. BLM invited the parties to provide additional site-specific input to clarify their written comments submitted during the public comment period.

February 29, 2016: BLM hosted a meeting with the Farmworkers Institute of Education and Leadership Development to discuss planned restoration work in the Calico Mountain and Juniper Flats Subregions.

March 2, 2016: BLM hosted a meeting with members of the Friends of Juniper Flats to discuss their written comments submitted during the public comment period, including their proposed hiking trails.

March 3, 2016: BLM hosted a meeting with THC to review the delineation of area proposed for restoration, and ongoing restoration and education activities.

March 10, 2016: BLM conducted field review with USFS in the Juniper Flats area to review and document incursions occurring in the vicinity of the BLM/USFS boundary.

March 15, 2016: BLM attended a Fremont Project briefing with THC and representatives from the California Department of Fish and Wildlife (CDFW).

March 15, 2016: BLM conducted a field review of two recently acquired CDFW conservation parcels (sections) located southeast of Kramer Junction.

March 16-18, 2016: BLM hosted meetings in Barstow, Ridgecrest, Moreno Valley, and Sacramento with representatives of the California Wilderness Coalition and The Wilderness Society to discuss their written comments on the West Mojave Route Network Project.

March 17, 2015: BLM attended a partner meeting with THC for the Fremont Project.

March 22, 2015: BLM hosted a meeting with representatives of the Ord Mountain range allotment to receive additional input on their use of access routes and to discuss their written comments on the West Mojave Route Network Project.