

Application: Windy Point Restoration

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

Agency: BLM - Palm Springs South Coast Field Office

A. List of Restoration Activities

On January 31, 2001, the BLM designated the Windy Point area closed to all motorized vehicles for habitat protection. The Terms and Conditions of the US FWS Biological Opinion (FWS-ERIV-3066.2, December 24, 2002) regarding the CDCA Coachella Valley Plan Amendment directed the BLM to implement protection measures for the Windy Point area to protect the Coachella Valley fringe-toed lizard and Coachella Valley milk-vetch from damage caused by illegal OHV use. Despite the issuance of hundreds of citations by BLM law enforcement, illegal OHV activity in this valuable area continues. In January 2011, the BLM, with Off-Highway Motor Vehicle Recreation (OHMVR) and Friends of the Desert Mountains funding, established a physical fence along the east side of Snow Creek Road to limit access, discourage illegal OHV activity and better delineate the closure area.

This project will provide restoration to help prevent continued illegal OHV trespass in Windy Point area. Field crews will restore unauthorized routes for the entire line-of-sight along Snow Creek Road barriers. This will discourage future OHV intrusion and facilitate natural processes. Regeneration in the desert is naturally a slow process and requires long-term strategies. Restoration treatments will incorporate methods such as raking, pitting and mulching. These proven methods not only improve water infiltration and soil conditions, but help to trap windblown seeds and provide critical shading to growing plants. These methods, in conjunction with the collection and distribution of native seed sources at appropriate sites, efficiently and economically facilitate natural regeneration.

The development and placement of interpretive signs will inform the public of important boundaries, recreational opportunities and natural resources to support the protection of restoration sites. Law enforcement patrol and monitoring of these sites will encourage OHV compliance. The removal of hill climbs visible from both Interstate 10 and Highway 111 will reduce the amount of people coming to this particular spot looking for OHV recreational activities.

B. Describe how the proposed Project relates to OHV Recreation and how OHV Recreation caused the damage:

The Bureau of Land Management (BLM) Palm Springs-South Coast Field Office (PSSC FO) manages 1,500 miles of Off-Highway Vehicle (OHV) routes on over 1.65 million acres. This Field Office has successfully undertaken numerous, large-scale desert restoration projects to enhance sustainable OHV recreation. The mandate of multiple use management challenges the BLM to balance the ever-increasing demand for OHV recreational opportunities with

conservation efforts in a way that protects valuable cultural, biological and wilderness resources. Resource damage, such as destruction of protected habitat caused by a limited number of OHV users, has led to criticism of the entire OHV community. To facilitate responsible OHV recreational opportunities, BLM incorporates a multifaceted approach which includes law enforcement, public outreach, signage of legal routes, closure of unauthorized routes, and restoration of lands damaged by illegal OHV activity. Restoration projects are an essential part of this equation because they serve to encourage responsible OHV recreation, and demonstrate to the public how OHV dollars support the protection of public land. By restoring natural resources, this project will reduce user conflict, enhance public awareness, and sustain legal OHV opportunities in the local area.

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

Windy Point is located within the Palm Springs-South Coast Field Office (PSSC FO), Santa Rosa and San Jacinto Mountains National Monument (SRSJNM) and the planned Coachella Valley Multiple Species Habitat Conservation (CVMSHC) area. The 3,500-acre project area lies between the base of the San Jacinto Mountains and Highway 111 in Riverside County, approximately five miles northwest of Palm Springs, California. Windy Point is highly visible as you head east from Los Angeles to Palm Springs through the San Geronio Pass on Interstate 10. From here, visitors can view Mount San Jacinto and obtain access to the Pacific Crest National Scenic Trail. The Windy Point area is critical habitat for many plants and animals adapted to the unique sandy, windblown soil, including the federally threatened Coachella Valley fringe-toed lizard and the federally endangered Coachella Valley milk-vetch.

D. Monitoring and Methodology

Site monitoring of the project will include regular patrols of the fence line to check for vandalism and intrusions. Monitoring report forms will be completed on a regular basis by law enforcement, restoration and recreation personnel. Photo documentation of any vandalism to the fence line or information signs will be provided. The project site will also be monitored for compliance and frequency of use by hikers in the area and by Snow Creek community members who drive by on their way to and from home.

Photo documentation: Photo documentation for the project will consist of pre- and post-construction photos. Additional post-construction photos and compliance monitoring will take place periodically for the next three years.

Data on Monitoring Prescription: Initial monitoring will include general information such as date, time, location, photo reference, and site characteristics, including current OHV use and frequency. Follow-up monitoring will document the success or failure as well as any persistent disturbance by OHV traffic.

OHV compliance: Follow-up monitoring will document success of the project in terms of OHV rider compliance by documenting the reduction and/or elimination of intrusion into the ACEC.

Compliance monitoring will track success of the fence project based on evidence of OHV use. If vandalism and trespass is absent, then the project will be considered successful. If OHV intrusions continue into the Windy Point Area, it will be considered unsuccessful, and additional measures will be explored to obtain OHV compliance. As soon as any intrusions by OHV users into the Windy Point Area are observed, the incidents will be reported to the recreation planner or project supervisor.

E. List of Reports

F. Goals, Objectives and Methodology / Peer Reviews

G. Plan for Protection of Restored Area

Law enforcement patrols, signs, and barrier maintenance will be used to insure the restored area will be protected. The development and placement of interpretive signs will inform the public of important boundaries, recreational opportunities and natural resources to support the protection of restoration sites. Law enforcement patrol and monitoring of these sites will encourage OHV compliance.