

**U.S. DEPARTMENT OF THE INTERIOR  
BUREAU OF LAND MANAGEMENT  
PALM SPRINGS-SOUTH COAST FIELD OFFICE**

**ENVIRONMENTAL ASSESSMENT  
EA Number CA-660-05-81**

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**DATE:** August 24, 2005

**TITLE / PROJECT TYPE:** Steele Valley Shooting Closure

**APPLICANT / PROPONENT:** BLM – PSSC Field Office

**LOCATION OF PROPOSED ACTION:** T.4S., R.4W., Section 32 S1/2S1/2SE1/4 SBM, Riverside County. Steele Valley is located at the western edge of the city of Perris, California and the eastern edge of the city of Lake Elsinore, California. The Bureau of Land Management administered lands occupy the northern and western edge of the valley with the remainder in private land holdings.

<b>PROJECT ACREAGE:</b>	<b>BLM</b>	<u>  40 Acres  </u>
	<b>Other Federal</b>	<u>    0    </u>
	<b>State</b>	<u>    0    </u>
	<b>Private</b>	<u>    0    </u>
	<b>Other (specify)</b>	<u>    0    </u>

**USGS TOPOGRAPHIC MAP:** Steele Peak 7.5 minute quad

**LAND USE PLAN CONFORMANCE and Other Regulatory Compliance:**

Land Use Plan Conformance. In accordance with Title 43 Code of Federal Regulations 1610.5-3, the proposed action and alternatives are in conformance with the *South Coast Resource Management Plan and Record of Decision* (1994).

Endangered Species Act. A determination of “no affect” to Federally-listed species was made; formal consultation with USFWS in accordance with the Endangered Species Act is not required.

Cultural Resources and Native American Concerns. Section 106 of the National Historic Preservation Act (NHPA), as implemented (36 CFR Part 800), requires Federal agencies to take into account the effects of their undertakings on historic properties. The State Protocol Agreement (2004) between the California State Director of the BLM, and the California State Historic Preservation Officer (SHPO) defines the roles and relationships between the SHPO’s office and the BLM under the National Programmatic Agreement. The State protocol is intended to ensure that the BLM operates efficiently and effectively in accordance with the intent and requirements of the NHPA. The protocol streamlines the Section 106 process by not requiring case-by-case consultation with the SHPO on most individual undertakings. No historic

properties are located within the Area of Potential Effect for this undertaking. BLM proposes a “no effect” determination on historic properties.

Valid existing rights shall not be affected by any proposed action or alternatives outlined in this environmental assessment. The BLM has no authority over private, County, State or other Federal lands. No decisions shall be made by BLM regarding use of firearms on private, County, State or other Federal lands. The Riverside County Sheriff’s Office is the appropriate contact for any firearms issues on private, County or State lands.

## **NEED FOR THE PROPOSED ACTION**

The BLM has received numerous complaints from local landowners regarding stray and ricocheting bullets hitting structures and nearly hitting persons on private property in the vicinity of Steele Valley in western Riverside County. Local landowners have also complained about automatic weapons being discharged from adjacent public lands. As the southern California population increases and urbanization continues to spread into rural areas adjacent to BLM-administered public lands, the issue of firearm use within the wildland-urban interface will continue to rise. The BLM would like to work with the local community and interest groups to find ways to protect persons and property, while providing opportunities for safe firearm use.

The regulations at Title 43 Code of Federal Regulations sections 8364.1 and 8365.1-6 authorize BLM to issue closure and restriction orders and supplementary rules which provide for the protection of persons, property and public lands and resources. These regulations are issued under the provisions of the Federal Land Policy and Management Act of 1976.

## **DESCRIPTION OF THE PROPOSED ACTION and ALTERNATIVES**

### **A. Proposed Action**

The BLM proposes to issue a closure order which (1) prohibits the discharge of firearms on 40 acres of BLM-administered land in T.4 S, R.4 W., Section 32 S1/2S1/2SE1/4 SBM and (2) closes the same area to motorized vehicle use. In order to more effectively implement the closure, BLM proposes to (1) conduct a clean-up of the area to remove shooting debris and trash, (2) install “closed” signs, (3) install boulders and gates to block motorized vehicle access to the former shooting area, and (4) rehabilitate the area to disguise the former route and shooting area. The closure order would be published in local media and in the *Federal Register* as supplementary rules.

The clean-up would be conducted largely by a team of hand crews. A rubber-wheeled tractor would be used to remove large pieces of trash, such as appliances and abandoned cars. A dumpster would be rented and available on site during the clean-up. Boulders of similar rock type would be purchased, brought to the area by truck, and installed using a rubber-wheeled tractor. The route and shooting area would be rehabilitated using a variety of hand-tool methods to restore a more natural look to the landscape. A qualified biologist will be on-site while the aforementioned work is conducted to ensure any Stephen’s kangaroo rat burrows that may be in the vicinity are avoided.

B. Wider Target Shooting Closure Alternative

Under this alternative, the BLM would issue a closure order which (1) restricts the discharge of firearms except for the legal take of game on all BLM-administered public lands in T.4 S, R.4 W., Section 32 (approximately 464 acres) and all BLM-administered public lands in T. 5 S., R 4 W., Sections 4 and 9 (approximately 755 acres), for a total of 1,214 acres. “No shooting” signs would be installed throughout the area. The closure order would be published in local media and in the *Federal Register* as supplementary rules. As funding becomes available, BLM would clean-up the area to remove trash and shooting debris. The clean-up would be conducted largely by a team of hand crews. A rubber-wheeled tractor would be used to remove large pieces of trash, such as appliances and abandoned cars. A dumpster would be rented and available on site during the clean-up. A qualified biologist will be on-site while the aforementioned work is conducted to ensure any Stephen’s kangaroo rat burrows that may be in the vicinity are avoided.

C. No Action Alternative

The Proposed Action would not be undertaken. Existing management and use of the site would continue subject to applicable statutes, regulations, policy and land use plans.

## ENVIRONMENTAL CONSEQUENCES

### A. Critical Elements

The following table summarizes potential impacts to various elements of the human environment, including the "critical elements" listed in BLM Manual H-1790-1, Appendix 5, as amended. Elements for which there are no impacts will not be discussed further in this document.

Environmental Element	Proposed Action	Wider Shooting Closure	No Action Alternative
Air Quality/Noise	Reduce noise levels	Reduce noise levels	No change
ACECs	No effect	No effect	No effect
Cultural Resources	No effect	No effect	No effect
Native American Concerns	No effect	No effect	No effect
Farmlands	Reduce shooting hazards for local residents	Reduce shooting hazards for local residents	No change
Floodplains	No effect	No effect	No effect
Energy (E.O. 13212)	No effect	No effect	No effect
Minerals	No effect	No effect	No effect
T&E Animal Species	Reduce noise disturbance	Reduce noise disturbance	No change
T&E Plant Species	No effect	No effect	No effect
Invasive, Non-native Species	No effect	No effect	No effect
Wastes (hazardous/solid)	Reduce target shooting waste	Reduce target shooting waste	No change
Water Quality	No effect	No effect	No effect
Wetlands/Riparian Zones	No effect	No effect	No effect
Wild and Scenic Rivers	No effect	No effect	No effect
Wilderness	No effect	No effect	No effect
Environmental Justice	No effect	No effect	No effect
Health and Safety Risks to Children	Reduce shooting hazards for local residents	Reduce shooting hazards for local residents	No change
Visual Resource Mgmt.	Improved viewshed	Improved viewshed	No change

B. Discussion of Impacts

1. **Proposed Action.** Closing the 40 acres of public lands within line of sight of residences in Steele Valley would reduce hazards from stray bullets. Noise levels would also be reduced. Opportunities for target shooting would still exist on other public lands within the region. Cleaning up the closure site and installing boulders would help to discourage continued target shooting within the closure area.
2. **Wider Target Shooting Closure Alternative.** Closing 1,214 acres of public lands within the vicinity of Steele Valley would further reduce hazards from stray bullets. Noise levels would also be reduced. Opportunities for target shooting on public lands would be eliminated from the area. Target shooting opportunities would continue to be available at the local gun club on private land.
3. **No Action Alternative.** Under this alternative, target shooting would continue to be allowed on the public lands. Despite regulations and ordinances requiring use of an appropriate backstop for target shooting, stray bullets periodically strike near residences within line of sight of the public lands. The BLM has received numerous complaints from local residences about this hazard.

C. Mitigation Measures and Residual Impacts. None identified.

D. Cumulative Impacts

As urban development continues to spread into the wild lands of southern California, more and more pressure will be placed on BLM and the U.S. Forest Service to control or eliminate target shooting from the public lands. The next best option is to provide for target shooting in designated areas with more intensive management oversight, such as private gun clubs or through public-private management partnerships.

**LIST of PREPARERS**

Janaye Byergo, South Coast Project Manager  
Art Tracey, Law Enforcement Ranger  
Rolla Queen, Cultural Resource Specialist  
Kevin Doran, Natural Resource Specialist  
Elena Misquez, Associate Field Manager

**PUBLIC PARTICIPATION**

This environmental assessment is available for a 30-day public review period, beginning the date this environmental assessment is published on BLM's web site at { HYPERLINK

"http://www.ca.blm.gov/palmsprings" }. Please submit your comments to the following address:

Ms. Gail Acheson, Field Manager  
USDI Bureau of Land Management  
Palm Springs-South Coast Field Office  
North Palm Springs, CA 92258

**FREEDOM OF INFORMATION ACT CONSIDERATIONS:**

Public comments submitted for this environmental assessment, including names and street addresses of respondents, will be available for public review at the Palm Springs-South Coast Field Office during regular business hours (7:45 a.m. to 4:30 p.m.), Monday through Friday, except holidays. Individual respondents may request confidentiality. If you wish to withhold your name or address from public review or from disclosure under the Freedom of Information Act, you must state this prominently at the beginning of your comments. Such requests will be honored to the extent allowed by law. All submissions from organizations or businesses, and from individuals identifying themselves as representatives or officials of organizations or businesses, will be made available for public inspection in their entirety.

**FINDING OF NO SIGNIFICANT IMPACT:** Environmental impacts associated with the proposed action have been assessed. Based on the analysis provided in the attached EA, I conclude the approved action is not a major federal action and will result in no significant impacts to the environment under the criteria in Title 40 Code of Federal Regulations 1508.18 and 1508.27. Preparation of an Environmental Impact Statement to further analyze possible impacts is not required pursuant to Section 102(2)(c) of the National Environmental Policy Act of 1969.

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Gail Acheson  
Field Manager

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Date

**U.S. DEPARTMENT OF THE INTERIOR  
BUREAU OF LAND MANAGEMENT  
PALM SPRINGS-SOUTH COAST FIELD OFFICE**

**DECISION RECORD  
CA-660-05-81**

**NAME of PROJECT:** Steele Valley Shooting Closure

**DECISION:** It is my decision to approve the proposed action as described in Environmental Assessment (EA) number CA-660-05-81. Compliance with the mitigation measures identified in the EA is hereby required. These measures are incorporated into this decision record as stipulations by reference. A copy of this Decision Record and attendant conditions of approval (stipulations) shall be in the possession of the on-site operator during all undertakings approved herein.

**RATIONALE:** The approved action will help to reduce shooting hazards near residences while still providing opportunities for target shooting on public lands within the vicinity. The approved action will not cause unnecessary or undue degradation, and is in conformance with the following applicable land use plan: *South Coast Resource Management Plan and Record of Decision* (1994).

**FINDING OF NO SIGNIFICANT IMPACT:** Environmental impacts associated with the proposed action have been assessed. Based on the analysis provided in the attached EA, I conclude the approved action is not a major federal action and will result in no significant impacts to the environment under the criteria in Title 40 Code of Federal Regulations 1508.18 and 1508.27. Preparation of an Environmental Impact Statement to further analyze possible impacts is not required pursuant to Section 102(2)(c) of the National Environmental Policy Act of 1969.

**APPEALS:** This decision may be appealed to the Interior Board of Land Appeals, Office of the Secretary, in accordance with the regulations at Title 43 of the Code of Federal Regulations (CFR), Part 4, and the information provided in Form 1842-1 (enclosed). If an appeal is taken, your notice of appeal must be filed in the Palm Springs-South Coast Field Office, Bureau of Land Management, U.S. Department of the Interior, 690 West Garnet Avenue, P.O. Box 581260, North Palm Springs, California 92258, within 30 days from receipt of this decision. The appellant has the burden of showing that the decision appealed from is in error.

If you wish to file a petition for a stay of the effectiveness of this decision during the time that your appeal is being reviewed by the Board, pursuant to Title 43 of the Code of Federal Regulations, Part 4, Subpart E, the petition for a stay must accompany your notice of appeal. A petition for a stay is required to show sufficient justification based on the standards listed below. Copies of the notice of appeal and petition for a stay must also be submitted to each party named in this decision and to the Interior Board of Land Appeals and to the appropriate Office of the Solicitor (see 43 CFR 4.413) at the same time the original documents are filed with this office. If you request a stay, you have the burden of proof to demonstrate that a stay should be granted.

**Standards for Obtaining a Stay**

Except as otherwise provided by law or other pertinent regulations, a petition for a stay of a decision pending appeal shall show sufficient justification based on the following standards:

- (1) the relative harm to the parties if the stay is granted or denied,
- (2) the likelihood of the appellant's success on the merits,
- (3) the likelihood of immediate and irreparable harm if the stay is not granted, and
- (4) whether the public interest favors granting the stay.

**APPROVED BY:**

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Field Manager  
Palm Springs-South Coast Field Office  
USDI Bureau of Land Management  
690 W. Garnet Avenue; P.O. Box 581260  
North Palm Springs, CA 92258-1260

\_\_\_\_\_  
Date