

UNITED STATES DEPARTMENT OF THE INTERIOR
BUREAU OF LAND MANAGEMENT
PALM SPRINGS-SOUTH COAST FIELD OFFICE

CATEGORICAL EXCLUSION REVIEW AND DECISION RECORD

CX Number: CA-660-05-27

Name of Proposed Action: Sign the Boundaries of Big Morongo ACEC

Legal Description: San Bernardino Base Meridian, Riverside and San Bernardino Counties
T1S, R4E: Sections 22, 23, 24, 27, 32, 33
T1S, R5E: Sections 18, 20, 21
T2S, R4E: Sections 10, 11, 12
T2S, R5E: Sections 18, 20, 26, 28

Land Use Plan conformance: In compliance with 43CFR1610.5-3 and BLM MS1617.3, the proposed action is in conformance with the *South Coast Resource Management Plan (1994)* or *California Desert Conservation Area Plan (1980 as amended)*.

Description of Proposed Action: Big Morongo ACEC is located half in Riverside County and half in San Bernardino County. In order to increase public awareness of the ACEC, reduce unintentional trespass by OHV users, and augment the ability of BLM Law Enforcement to protect the ACEC from adverse impacts, BLM proposes to place carsonite signs along the ACEC boundary.

Signs would be placed along the boundaries of the ACEC at approximately quarter-mile intervals and at each location where an unauthorized route enters the ACEC (on public lands only). The crew of two people would travel on established roads or on foot, as necessary, to implement the signing. They will use a metal 'carsonite pounder' to install the signs. Signs would only be placed on public land- signing would not occur for the parts of the ACEC boundary that lie on private land. Where portions of the ACEC boundary are on very steep, rocky hillsides and the placement of a sign is deemed unnecessary and unsafe, the sign would be placed in the nearest accessible location along the ACEC boundary, and the interval distance for sign spacing would resume from that sign. The locations of all signs would be recorded by GPS.

The northern, southern, eastern, and western boundaries of the ACEC have different signing needs, described below. Please see attached map for more details.

Northern: The northern boundary of Big Morongo ACEC is a jagged diagonal line, caused by the arrangement of parcels of private land adjacent to public land. This boundary of the ACEC receives frequent trespasses by OHV users, and law enforcement has cited the need for better marking of the ACEC boundary, especially where unauthorized routes enter the ACEC. Section 28 in T1S, R4E, where Covington Park is located, is contained in the ACEC but is not public land. The ACEC boundary in this section is already protected from vehicular trespass because of the Big Morongo Canyon Preserve/Covington Park. Therefore, signing for this project would stop where the ACEC boundary enters Section 28 (from Section 33) and resume again where it

leaves Section 28 (Section 27). The extreme northern tip of the ACEC is composed of two non-adjointing partial sections above Highway 62 (T1S R5E Sec. 6 and T1N R4E Sec. 36). This isolated corner of the ACEC would be excluded from this initial signing effort. Instead, the northernmost boundary of public land in the ACEC to the south of Highway 62 would be signed (T1S R5E Sec. 18 and Sec. 20). Please refer to the dashed line on the map in these sections for clarification. In total, the northern boundary of the ACEC that would be signed has a length of approximately 12.5 miles. Approximately 50-60 carsonite signs would be installed along this boundary, depending on the terrain.

Southern: The southern boundary is less jagged than the northern boundary. It also receives significant OHV trespass through the small canyons that enter the ACEC, especially Blind Canyon (T2S R5E Sec. 18). In total, the southern boundary of the ACEC that would be signed has a length of approximately 9 miles. Approximately 30-40 carsonite signs would be installed along this boundary, depending on the terrain.

Eastern: The eastern boundary is adjacent to Joshua Tree National Park, which is closed to vehicles. This 8.5 mile long boundary should not require any signing, and would not be signed as a part of the proposed action.

Western: The western boundary is only approximately 1.5 miles long, located just to the west of Highway 62. This boundary overlaps the boundary of the San Gorgonio Wilderness, which extends east to Highway 62. BLM would assume that the San Gorgonio wilderness has been signed and protected from OHV trespass, therefore protecting the section of Big Morongo ACEC to the west of the highway. Highway 62 also provides a barrier against OHV trespass for the majority of the ACEC (located to the E of the Highway), so signing along the western boundary is not recommended at this time.

Signing would continue as funding permits, or until the northern and southern borders have been signed. Priorities for signing would be:

1. Entire N boundary (¼ mile intervals and where routes intersect boundary)
2. S boundary route intersections
3. S boundary ¼ mile intervals

In total, approximately 21 miles of the ACEC boundary would be marked with signs. The total number of signs used would be approximately 80-100. The surface disturbance for each sign would be approximately four square feet (the foothold of the two people who stand facing each other to install the carsonite), making the total surface disturbance of the project approximately 320-400 square feet.

Categorical Exclusion Reference: 516 DM 6, Appendix 5.4 G(4). Placement of recreational, special designation or information signs.

Screening for Exceptions: The following exceptions apply to individual actions within categorical exclusions (516 DM, Appendix 2). The preparer and/or indicated specialist must verify that the Proposed Action does not:

2.1	Have significant adverse effects of public health or safety?	no
2.2	Have adverse effects on such unique geographic characteristics as historic or cultural resources, park, recreation or refuge lands, wilderness areas, wild or scenic rivers, sole or principal drinking water aquifers, prime farm lands, wet lands, flood plains, or ecologically significant or critical areas, including those listed on the Department's National Register of National Landmarks?	no
2.3	Have highly controversial environmental effects?	no
2.4	Have highly uncertain and potentially significant environmental effects or involve unique or unknown environmental risks?	no
2.5	Establish a precedent for future actions or represent a decision in principle about future actions with potentially significant environmental effects?	no
2.6	Be directly related to other actions with individually insignificant but cumulatively significant environmental effects?	no
2.7	Have adverse effects on properties listed or eligible for listing on the National Register of Historic Places?	no
2.8	Have adverse effects on species listed or proposed to be listed on the List of Endangered or Threatened Species or have adverse effects on designated critical habitat for these species?	no
2.9	Require compliance with Executive Order 11988 (Floodplain Management), Executive Order 11990 (Protection of Wetlands), or the Fish and Wildlife Coordination Act?	no
2.10	Threaten to violate a Federal, State, or local or tribal law or requirement imposed for the protection of the environment?	no

Prepared by:

Reviewed by: _____
 Environmental Coordinator

DECISION: It is my decision to approve the proposed action as described in Categorical Exclusion (CX) number CA-660-05-27. I find this action conforms with 516 Departmental Manual (DM) 2 and DM 6 with no exceptions. I further find this action in conformance with applicable land use plans and that it will not cause unnecessary or undue degradation.

Conditions of approval, if attached, are incorporated by reference as the decision of the Bureau of Land Management regarding this action. A copy of this Decision Record and attendant conditions of approval shall be in the possession of the on-site operator during all undertakings approved herein.

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.

An appeal from this decision may be taken to the State Director, California State Office, Bureau of Land Management in accordance with the provisions at Title 43 Code of Federal Regulations 3160. If an appeal is taken, the notice of appeal must be filed with 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 thirty (30) days from receipt of this decision. Do not send the notice of appeal to the State Director. The appeal and the case history will be sent to the State Director by the Field Office. The appeal to the State Director must contain: (1) the name and mailing address of the appellant; (2) where applicable, the name of the mining claim(s) and serial number(s) assigned to the mining claim(s) recorded pursuant to Part 3833 of this title which are subject to appeal; and (3) a statement of reasons for appeal and any arguments the appellant wishes to present which would justify reversal or modification of the decision. To avoid summary dismissal of the appeal, there must be strict compliance with the regulations.

During the appeal to the State Director, all decisions from which the appeal is taken shall be effective during the pendency of the appeal.

If no appeal is taken, this decision constitutes final administrative action of this Department as it affects the mining claim(s). No appeal, protest or petition for reconsideration will be entertained from this decision after the appeal period has expired.

APPROVED BY:

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

Date