

DRAFT - PSSC FO 2008 OHMVR GRANTS

2008 Law Enforcement Project

The Palm Springs-South Coast Field Office (PSSC FO) manages some 1.65 million acres of public lands extending from the Colorado River to the Pacific Ocean and south to the Mexican border. These public lands are adjacent to California's most densely populated urban areas and include all BLM-managed land in all of Riverside County and portions of Los Angeles, San Bernardino, and San Diego counties.

The BLM law enforcement program is responsible for protecting public safety and resources across the nation's 264 million acres of BLM-managed public land, which is accomplished through partnerships with state and local law enforcement agencies. The focus of the PSSC FO Law Enforcement Off-Highway Vehicle (OHV) Program is to increase a BLM presence in recreational areas throughout the field office while promoting safe and legal OHV recreational use on public lands. Law enforcement works closely with the Coachella Valley Association of Governments (CVAG) OHV Task Force in partnership projects to enhance compliance through signing, outreach and other efforts.

Because the PSSC FO is responsible for public lands in the urban interface where growth is occurring, the management of those lands directly affects the quality of life for the large and growing population of Southern California. Population growth and the continuing demands for OHV recreation in Southern California has led to increased use on public lands. Areas which were once backcountry regions and are now considered front country areas easily accessible by many new communities. BLM law enforcement officers perform duties related to the public land resources, rather than duplicate services provided by county sheriffs and other law enforcement agencies.

The PSSC FO Law Enforcement Officers are responsible for five uniquely different areas covered under the following Land Use Plans:

1. The Northern & Eastern Colorado Desert Coordinated Management Plan (NECO) covers lands extending from the Coachella Valley continuing to the edge of the California Desert District near the Colorado River. Under the land use plan, approximately 1500 miles of trail systems are available for recreational use. The Meccacopia Special Recreation Area is located within this region. Its unique mixture of stunning landscapes, tectonic formations, and specialized plant and animal life draw large numbers of visitors to the area each year. The location offers ideal camping and OHV touring opportunities, receiving its heaviest use during the winter holiday seasons when OHV patrols are brought in for safety and compliance.

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2. The South Coast Resource Management Plan includes lands within western Riverside County extending south through San Diego County. This plan is currently going through revision. Route designations and inventories are a primary focus
3. The California Desert Conservation Area Plan Amendment for the Coachella Valley (CDCA-CV) and adjacent areas are parcels of public lands heavily fragmented by privately owned sections. Many designated routes within the plan area are no longer than one mile in length. Longer route segments are located on the east side of the Coachella Valley near the interface with the NECO plan. The CVAG OHV Task Force partners work to ensure that Off-Highway Vehicles operate only in those areas designated for use and to prevent conflict between users. Outreach and compliance are extreme important within the Coachella Valley.
4. The Santa Rosa and San Jacinto Mountains National Monument (SRSJMNM) Management Plan covers an area of granite cliffs and valleys similar to the Sierra Mountains. The sheer northern face of the mountains, which make up the Monument, is one of the steepest mountain faces within the continental United States. The Monument, managed by BLM and Forest Service, has approximately five miles of OHV trail available on BLM lands that includes Martinez Canyon, which is technically difficult. Law Enforcement efforts are concentrated at Windy Point, which was closed on January 31, 2001 for the protection of the Coachella Valley fringe-toed lizard. Unauthorized OHV use within the area has lead to serious environmental degradation and desertification of slopes within the area.
5. California Coastal National Monument Resource Management Plan covers the rocks and islands off the coast of California. There were no OHV issues identified in the plan.

Recreational riders seek out the landscapes that offer the most challenge for their abilities. BLM Law Enforcement Rangers understand the pleasure of riding, as well as the landscape of their patrol areas and know where to find the perfect riding opportunities. These areas attract the largest level of OHV use, and it is for these areas the majority of Law Enforcement Projects are planned. Grant funds supplement federal funds already supporting law enforcement efforts in these areas (Note: Star locations on Sector Map of Field Office).

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The Field Office consists of the following eight patrol sectors.

Eastern Riverside County

Sector 1 - Santa Rosa and San Jacinto Mountains National Monument

Sector 2, 3 and 8 - Coachella Valley

Sector 4 & 5 Eastern Desert & the Meccacopia SMRA

Western Riverside County and San Diego County

Sector 7 - Inland Empire and other urban area land holdings

Sector 6 – Western San Diego County

BLM OHV patrols involve the teaming of two or more BLM Rangers from different patrol sectors, often teamed with non-law enforcement staff and volunteers. Under the Memorandum of Understanding with CVAG, a BLM officer may team with an officer from the cities of Desert Hot Springs, Indio, Cathedral City, or Palm Springs, or the Riverside County Sheriff from the Indio or Palm Desert Stations. Within western Riverside County, the PSSC FO LE Ranger may team with members of the Sheriff Riverside Off-Highway Vehicle Enforcement (ROVE) team. These events are coordinated with other agencies, partnerships and BLM divisions prior to the event.

Within the PSSC FO, both a recreation staff member and the BLM Blythe OHV Ranger are certified trainers in the *Tread Lightly* and *Leave No Trace* education programs and participate in local school and community events.

The BLM Blythe OHV Ranger is also an OHV Vehicle Trainer and coordinates the training of BLM staff and local law enforcement officers. He also brings the *Tread Lightly* land ethics to the personnel he trains. Recently, the BLM National Training Center introduced a new unit of programs requiring BLM OHV riders to complete a set of on-line classes plus one classroom component for advanced safety officers.

To carry out law enforcement functions, BLM purchases and maintains vehicles and equipment dedicated to law enforcement personnel. Equipment includes 4X4 patrol vehicles, all-terrain vehicles to access difficult areas, safety equipment (helmets, boots, and other riding gear), emergency medical supplies, digital cameras, communications equipment, etc. BLM will inform the OHMVR of miscellaneous expenses at the time of purchase.

Rangers educate the public in OHV opportunities, discourage unlawful behavior and protect public lands for future enjoyment. Additionally, rangers ensure safe riding habits, setting example of appropriate equipment, and land use ethic. A law enforcement presence is essential for the public to recreate safely on public lands.