

United States Department of the Interior  
Bureau of Land Management  
Environmental Assessment # DOI – BLM – CA – D05000 – 2014 -032 - EA  
Case File # none

## Finding of No Significant Impact

### Red Mountain Closed Route Restoration Environmental Assessment

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San Bernardino County, California

U.S. Department of the Interior  
Bureau of Land Management  
Ridgecrest Field Office  
300 South Richmond Road  
Ridgecrest, CA 93555

August 2015



Finding of No Significant Impact  
Ridgecrest Field Office  
Environmental Assessment # DOI - BLM - CA – D05000 – 2014 – 032 - EA  
Case File # none

**Proposed Action Title/Type:** Red Mountain Closed Route Restoration Environmental Assessment

**Applicant/Proponent:** None. This is an internal project.

**Location of Proposed Action:** The Red Mountain Sub-Region travel management area is located approximately 20 miles southeast of Ridgecrest and is defined by US Hwy 395 and Kern County line on the west; Spangler Hills OHV Management Area to the north; China Lake Air Weapons Station B Range to the east; and Barstow Field Office Management boundary to the south. Red Mountain is 120,199 acres in size and 82% (98,043 acres) is Federal lands managed by BLM. Private and State lands make up 18% (22,156 acres) of the land. The private land is owned by numerous landowners. There are also two wilderness areas that border the Red Mountain Sub-Region area: Golden Valley Wilderness and Grass Valley Wilderness.

The project area encompasses a majority of the Red Mountain Sub-Region Management area. The specific project area is bounded by Hwy 395 to the west, China Lake Naval Air Weapons Station (NAWS) Mojave Range B property and Grass Valley Wilderness to the east and north, Spangler Open Area to the north, and RM30 and Fremont Peak on the south. There is a southern peninsula included in the Red Mountain Sub-Region that is bounded on the east by Hwy 395, on the south by Hwy 58, and the Kern County/San Bernardino County line to the west. The project area falls within the following township and range locations:

T28.5S, R40E MDM Sections 35, 36  
T28S, R41E MDM Sections 32, 33  
T29S, R40E MDM Sections 1-3, 10-15, 23- 26, 36  
T29S, R41E MDM Sections 3-10, 16-22, 25- 36  
T29S, R42E MDM Section 36  
T29S, R43E MDM Sections 25-27, 31-36  
T29S, R44E MDM Sections 19- 21, 28, 29, 30- 33  
T30S, R41E MDM Sections 1-18, 20-36  
T30S, R42E MDM Sections 1, 3-36  
T30S, R43E MDM Sections 1-9, 12, 18  
T30S, R44E MDM Sections 4-9  
T31S, R41E MDM Sections 1-18, 20-36  
T31S, R42E MDM Sections 1-21, 29-31  
T32S, R41E MDM Sections 3-9, 16-21, 27-34  
T12N, R7W SBM Sections 33-36

## INTRODUCTION

This project would restore upland Mojave Desert scrub and Joshua tree woodland in the Red Mountain Sub-region and Desert Wildlife Management Area (DWMA).

Illegal vehicle use in the Red Mountain area may be causing increased soil erosion, soil compaction, and fragmentation of critical habitat for the desert tortoise (*Gopherus agassizii*) and the Mohave ground squirrel (*Spermophilus mohavensis*). There is also a need to educate the public about the area, its wildlife, native plants, and the BLM-designated route network. Rehabilitating illegal routes and camping/parking areas encourage vehicles to stay on BLM designated routes in the limited use area. Increased OHV compliance together with increased plant cover and diversity of shrubs, forbs, and grasses is expected to improve wildlife habitat, increase wildlife populations, and restore ecosystem processes. A timely response by BLM for soil protection and vegetation restoration in the area will afford greater protection to species of special concern to BLM managers, to outstanding scenic landscapes, and recreation uses, thereby meeting public expectations for environmental protection while advancing opportunities for high-quality recreation.

## PLAN CONFORMANCE AND CONSISTENCY

This land is subject to the California Desert Conservation Area (CDCA) Plan, as amended which was initially approved in 1980.

The CDCA Plan has been reviewed to determine if the alternatives considered in this Environmental Assessment conform with the land use plan terms and conditions as required by 43 CFR 1610.5. The No Action Alternative and all action alternatives conform to the CDCA Plan, as amended. No alternative would require a Plan Amendment.

The maintenance and restoration activities have been analyzed within the scope of the following land use plan, as amended, and have been found to be in compliance with the goals and objectives of these documents: California Desert Conservation Area (CDCA) Plan of 1980, as amended, including the West Mojave Plan Amendment (WEMO), 2006.

The CDCA Plan states that (1) areas of route proliferation and resource damage will be identified and the problem solved (Chapter 3, pg. 77), (2) routes determined as closed/unapproved will be barricaded or signed (Chapter 3, pg. 77) and (3) restoration activities will avoid, mitigate, and compensate for impacts to wildlife populations and habitat (Chapter 3, pg. 28).

The West Mojave Plan Amendment states that closed routes will either be left to reclaim naturally or vertically mulched and vertical mulch is preferred when environmental concerns (e.g. tortoise areas) are more profound or intensity of use requires more action (Chapter 2, 22-163, Section 2.2.6.10).

## FINDING OF NO SIGNIFICANT IMPACT

The Ridgecrest Field Office interdisciplinary review and analysis determined that the proposed action would not trigger significant impacts on the environment based on criteria established by regulations, policy and analysis.

Based on the findings discussed herein, I conclude that the proposed action is not a major Federal action and will result in no significant impacts to the environment, individually or cumulatively with other actions in the general area. No environmental effects meet the definition of significance in context or intensity as defined in 40 CFR 1508.27 and do not exceed those effects described in applicable land use plans. Therefore, 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.

This determination is based on the rationale that the significance criteria, as defined by the Council on Environmental Quality (CEQ) (40 CFR 1508.27) have not been met. "Significantly" as used in NEPA requires considerations of both context and intensity. In making this Finding of No Significant Impact (FONSI), the following criteria have been considered, in accordance with the Council on Environmental Quality (CEQ), 40 C.F.R. 1508.27.

**Context:** This means that the significance of an action must be analyzed in several contexts such as society as a whole (human, national), the affected region, the affected interests, and the locality. Significance varies with the setting of the proposed action. For instance, in the case of a site-specific action, significance would usually depend upon the effects in the locale rather than in the world as a whole. Both short and long term effects are relevant.

Environmental impacts associated with the proposed action and alternatives have been assessed by an interdisciplinary team and described in Environmental Assessment (EA) # DOI - BLM - CA – D05000 – 2014 – 032 - EA. The context of the EA analysis was determined to be at a local and regional scale in San Bernardino County, California. The effects of the action are not applicable on a national scale since no nationally significant values were involved.

**Intensity:** This refers to the severity of impact. The following discussion is organized around the Ten Significance Criteria described in 40 CFR 1508.27 and supplemental Instruction Memorandum, Acts, regulations and Executive Orders. **The following have been considered in evaluating intensity for this proposal.**

1) Impacts can be both beneficial and adverse and a significant effect may exist regardless of the perceived balance of effects.

Beneficial Effects: The proposed action would restore the project area land and allow it to be utilized as habitat. It would also improve the visual resource in the area.

Adverse Effects: The proposed action could result in minor temporary affects such as increased noise and dust. No significant affects were found.

2) *The degree to which the selected alternative will affect public health or safety.*

The proposed action would not affect public health or public safety.

3) *Unique characteristics of the geographic area such as proximity to historic or cultural resources, park lands, prime farm lands, wetlands, wilderness, wild and scenic rivers, or ecologically critical areas.*

The project area is near historic sites and Wilderness Areas. However, the proposed action would not have any adverse effect on these areas.

4) *The degree to which the effects on the quality of the human environment are likely to be highly controversial.*

There is no controversy on the effects of this project to the human environment. Restoration is often conducted and the effects are well known.

5) *The degree to which the possible effects on the human environment are highly uncertain or involve unique or unknown risks.*

The effects of this project to the human environment are known and do not involve unique risks. Restoration is often conducted and the effects are well known.

6) *The degree to which the action may establish a precedent for future actions with significant effects or represents a decision in principle about a future consideration.*

This project is not related to any other project or future action.

7) *Whether the action is related to other actions with individually insignificant but cumulatively significant impacts – which include connected actions regardless of land ownership.*

This project is not related to any other projects or actions.

8) *The degree to which the action may adversely affect districts, sites, highways, structures, or other objects listed in or eligible for listing in the National Register of Historic Places or may cause loss or destruction of significant scientific, cultural, or historical resources.*

This project does not affect any matters that are eligible for listing or that is listed. It also does not result in the loss or destruction of scientific, cultural or historic resources. As stated in the Environmental Assessment, cultural resources will not be affected by the proposed action.

9) *The degree to which the action may adversely affect an endangered or threatened species or its habitat that has been determined to be critical under the Endangered Species Act of 1973, or the degree to which the action may adversely affect: 1) a proposed to be listed endangered or threatened species or its habitat, or 2) a species on BLM's sensitive species list.*

As stated in the Environmental Assessment, listed species, species proposed for listing, and sensitive species are either not present in the project area or will be positively affected by improved habitat.

10) *Whether the action threatens a violation of a federal, state, local, or tribal law, regulation or policy imposed for the protection of the environment, where non-federal requirements are consistent with federal requirements.*

The proposed action is consistent with all laws, regulations and policies.

Reviewed by: /s/ *Lynnette Elser* 8/11/2015  
Environmental & Planning Coordinator Date

Approved by: /s/ *Carl Symons* 8/11/2015  
Carl Symons, Field Manager Date  
Ridgecrest Field Office