

APPENDIX O

OFF-HIGHWAY VEHICLE AREAS AND
ROUTE DESIGNATIONS

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In 1972, Executive Order 11644 required each Federal agency to designate “*areas and trails*” for off-highway vehicle (OHV) use or restriction and to develop regulations implementing this executive order. The BLM’s regulations (43 Code of Federal Regulations [CFR] 8340) established management areas as “*open*,” “*limited*,” “*limited to existing*,” or “*closed*” to off-road vehicle use.

OHV area designations are determined through a comprehensive land use planning process that serves as an adaptive and flexible approach to the management of all activities on public land. As circumstances and conditions have changed over the past several decades, the BLM has made a concerted effort to focus the agency’s resources in the development of land use plans by seeking additional funding and staff to address issues associated with the increased population growth near public lands.

Alternatives proposed in this Resource Management Plan (RMP) Revision and Amendment include revised OHV area designation, existing routes within the nine wilderness study areas (WSAs), and existing routes within all areas of critical environmental concern (ACECs) (see Chapter 2 and Tables O-1 and O-2 in this Appendix).

The TriCounty planning area has identified OHV area designations as follows: “*open*,” “*limited*,” “*limited to existing*,” or “*closed*” to motorized vehicles. Due to incomplete data, the route designation for motorized wheeled travel for the *Planning Area* will occur in a future activity-level route designation plan. Criterion will be developed to determine designated routes. Public participation will be encouraged as part of the route designation planning process. When the route designation plan is complete, designations will change from “*limited to existing routes*” to “*limited to designated routes*” upon the completion of the respective route designation plan. The route designation plan will be developed within 5 years of the signing of the Record of Decision. Motorized wheeled travel designations will not apply to State, county, or to private or State inholdings. The following information provides definitions of OHV designations and associated terms, a summary of the route inventory and designation process within WSAs, and the alternative route designations.

1 DEFINITIONS

Definitions of the BLM’s OHV designations and associated terms are listed below. OHV area designations are administrative, allowing management flexibility in response to changes in the environment. All public land areas must be designated as “*open*,” “*limited*,” or “*closed*” to motorized travel activities. The following terms are defined as stated in 43 CFR 8340.0-5.

- **Off-highway vehicle:** An OHV is any motorized vehicle capable of, or designed for, travel on or immediately over land, water, or other natural terrain, excluding: (1) any non-amphibious registered motorboat; (2) any military, fire, emergency, or law enforcement vehicle while being used for emergency purposes; (3) any vehicle whose use is expressly authorized by the authorized officer; (4) vehicles in official use; and (5) any combat or combat support vehicle when used in times of national defense emergencies. OHV use is subject to operating regulations and vehicle standards set forth in 43 CFR 8341 and 8342.

- **Open area designation:** This designation refers to any area where all types of vehicle use are permitted at all times, anywhere in the area subject to the operating regulations and vehicle standards set forth in 43 CFR 8341 and 8342. Open designations generally include areas where there are no compelling resource protection needs, use conflicts, or public safety issues that would warrant limiting OHV use.
- **Closed area designation:** This is an area where OHV use is prohibited. Closures may be necessary to protect resources, ensure visitor safety, or reduce use conflicts. Use of OHVs in closed areas may be allowed for certain reasons; however, such use shall be made only with the approval of the authorized officer.
- **Limited area designation:** This is an area restricted at certain times in certain areas, and/or to certain vehicular use. These restrictions may be of any type, but can generally be accommodated within the following categories: number of vehicles, types of vehicles, time or season of vehicle use, permitted or licensed use only, use on existing roads and trails, use on designated roads and trails, and other restrictions. Limitations may be used to meet specific resource management objectives, protect resources, or public safety.
- **Cross-country travel:** Cross-country travel refers to wheeled, motorized travel by any vehicle (recreational or other), off roads and trails.

Motorized travel is considered cross-country when:

- The passage of motorized vehicles depresses undisturbed ground and crushes vegetation.
- The motorized vehicle maximum width (the distance from the outside of the left tire to the outside of the right tire or maximum tire width for motorcycles) does not easily fit the road or trail profile. However, an all-terrain vehicle traveling within a two-track route established by a pickup truck is not considered cross-country travel.
- Use of motor vehicles off designated routes is limited to no more than 100 feet and only for the purpose of dispersed camping, parking, or allowing another vehicle to pass. In WSAs, use of vehicles off existing routes is only allowed for the minimum distance necessary to allow another vehicle to pass.
- Motorized vehicles use livestock and game trails, unless the trails are clearly evident, or continuous single-track routes used by motorcycles over a period of years.

Motorized travel is not considered cross-country when:

- Motorized vehicles use constructed roads that are maintained by the oil and gas industry and/or the BLM, unless specifically closed to use through signing and/or gates. Constructed roads are often characterized by a road prism with cut and fill slopes.
- Motorized vehicles use trails specifically designated for the vehicle being used.
- Motorized vehicles use clearly evident two-track and single-track routes with regular use and continuous passage of motorized vehicles over a period of years. A route is a track where perennial vegetation is devoid or scarce, or where wheel tracks are continuous depressions in the ground, evident to the casual observer, but are vegetated. While unauthorized routes are not part of the inventory, they are described as post-WSA routes on Maps J-1 through J-41.

- **Limited to existing routes:** Areas where OHV use is limited to routes that already exist.

The entire route must meet the above specifications. Newly created routes should be easily identified as not meeting the specifications because many portions would not show signs of regular and continuous passage of motorized vehicles and many areas would still be fully

vegetated with no wheel depressions. This definition does have some ambiguity that will continue to exist until formal designation of routes, trails, and areas within the entire *Planning Area* is completed. This definition only applies to cross-country travel in the dispersed area and not to cross-country travel within special management areas. A special management area may have its own management plan that defines regulations for cross-country travel within its boundaries.

1.1 Existing Routes and Closure Criterion in Wilderness Study Areas

OHV area designations for WSAs were managed under the *Interim Management Policy and Guidelines for Lands Under Wilderness Review H-8550-1*. This guidance has been updated and superseded by *BLM Manual 6330: Management of Wilderness Study Areas*. The following information provides definitions and information regarding area designations within WSAs, (Travel and Transportation, 1626, BLM Manual).

1.1.1 Route Designation Limitations Relating to WSA

In WSAs, motorized and mechanized use may be permitted to continue along existing routes identified in the wilderness inventory conducted in support of Sections 603 and 202 of FLPMA. In these cases, final route classification is delayed until Congressional action is taken or a land use plan decision is made to close those routes to motorized and mechanized use. Primitive roads and motorized/mechanized trails shall not be designated and classified as an asset within a WSA. Any motorized/mechanized linear transportation feature located within these areas will be identified in a transportation inventory as a motorized/mechanized —primitive route. Primitive routes will not be made a part of the transportation system, classified as a transportation asset, or entered into the Facility Asset Management System (FAMS) unless one of the following conditions is met:

- a. The routes are designated as non-motorized and non-mechanized trails, or
- b. Congress releases the WSA from Wilderness consideration and the routes are designated (BLM Manual 1626, 06B4)

1.1.2 Existing Routes and Area Designation Criterion

The following criteria apply to existing routes within ACECs in the *Decision Area*. Designation criteria are listed in 43 CFR 8342.1, a, b, c, and d as follows:

AREAS AND TRAILS SHALL

- a. Be located to minimize damage to soil, watershed, vegetation, air or other resources of the public lands, and to prevent impairment of wilderness suitability.
- b. Be located to minimize harassment of wildlife or significant disruption of wildlife habitats. Special attention will be given to protect endangered or threatened species and their habitats.
- c. Be located in areas that minimize conflicts between OHV use and other existing or proposed recreational uses in the same or neighboring public land, and to ensure the compatibility of such uses with existing conditions in populated areas, taking into account noise and other factors.
- d. Not be located in officially designated wilderness areas or primitive areas. Areas and trails shall be located in natural areas only if the authorized officer determines that OHV use in such locations will not adversely affect their natural, esthetic, scenic, or other values for which they are established.

Other designation considerations include:

- Routes that provide access to existing rights such as private land.
- Routes that cross or parallel stream courses.
- Routes that provide known access needs for the maintenance of authorized range improvements (pre-Federal Land Policy and Management Act [FLPMA] or other authorized administrative activities).
- Routes that provide access for unique recreational experiences and/or commercial activities (primarily outfitting).
- Routes previously “closed” in the White Sands RMP or Mimbres RMP as amended.

2 WILDERNESS STUDY AREAS EXISTING ROUTE INVENTORY

Completing OHV area designations within the WSAs (Table O-1) is an important goal in this RMP/EIS. Appendix C of BLM’s *Land Use Planning Handbook* directs Field Offices that “[at] a minimum, the travel management area designation for WSAs must be limited to ways and trails existing at the time the area became a WSA . . . Existing roads, ways and trails must be fully documented and mapped . . .”

WSA NAME	COUNTY	ACRES	MILES
Aden Lava Flow	Doña Ana	25,287	12.49
Organ Mountains	Doña Ana	7,283	0.95
Organ Needles	Doña Ana	7,630	3.00
Peña Blanca	Doña Ana	4,470	6.12
Robledo Mountains	Doña Ana	12,946	17.00
Las Uvas Mountains	Doña Ana	11,067	5.15
West Potrillo Mountains/Mount Riley	Doña Ana	157,185	93.82
Brokeoff Mountains	Otero	31,606	25.88
Jornada Lava Flow ¹	Sierra ¹	4,319	0

NOTE: ¹Approximately 23,000 acres of the Jornada Lava Flow WSA is Socorro County.

Under Alternative A, C, and D, vehicle use is limited to ways that existed at the time the areas were designated WSAs in 1980. Any post-1980 ways are “closed”. Under Alternative B, all ways within WSAs are “closed”. “Cherry stem” routes are not affected as they are, by definition, outside the WSA.

The Las Cruces District Office completed “vehicular routes [ways]” inventories for the nine WSAs in the TriCounty area in 1980. In 1993, the *Mimbres RMP* covering Doña Ana, Luna, Grant, and Hidalgo counties limited vehicle use in WSAs to designated ways. However, these designations were never implemented on-the-ground, and the *de facto* designation was one of limiting vehicle use to existing ways. Therefore, to complete a formal designation of vehicle routes in the TriCounty WSAs for the RMP Revision and Amendment required a baseline inventory of those routes that existed at the time of inventory (1980) or prior to the enactment of FLPMA (October 21, 1976). While the 1980 inventory is generally a good representation of what existed on-the-ground at the time, the maps predate current mapping technology and standards. In some cases, the 1980 “vehicular route” maps are inaccurate. For example, some of the legal descriptions of “vehicle access routes” do not correspond to mapped “vehicular routes.” In other instances, routes mapped in the 1980 inventory appear to be misplaced or drawn incorrectly.

To facilitate the goal of route-by-route OHV designations in the WSAs, and to improve the integrity of the baseline data used in the planning process, this review was undertaken to integrate the old WSA route

inventory into the BLM's geographic information system. The following discussion outlines the interpretive process and methodology used to make changes or corrections in the 1980 inventory.

2.1 Data Used

The following sources of information were reviewed during the route inventory. Much of these data have been verified on-the-ground with global positioning system (GPS) technology. All available data were reviewed to verify the extent of the existing routes at the time of the wilderness inventory. Many of the access routes within WSAs have been accurately recorded using the GPS over the past 5 to 10 years:

“Vehicular Routes” Maps, Intensive Wilderness Inventory Report (IWIR), March 1980: These maps were intended as a complete inventory of existing WSA routes, or ways (pre-FLPMA). Each map was hand drawn at a scale where 0.5 inch equaled 1 mile. The maps are crude and in black and white, and they show no features other than township and range, the WSA boundary, and approximate locations of routes. Upon careful inspection, it is clear that the path and length of some of the routes are incorrectly drawn and located on the map. In other instances, mapped routes do not correspond to any verifiable intrusion or disturbance when compared to research against the historical record.

“Vehicle Access Routes” Descriptions, IWIR, March 1980: Each of the mapped routes identified above correspond to written descriptions in the IWIR. These written descriptions include the approximate length of the route along with a legal description. Routes are sometimes described as “two-track,” “substantially unnoticeable,” and “jeep trail.” In some cases, these descriptions do not correspond to the location of the mapped route(s).

Assorted Working Maps and Descriptive Text Found in the IWIR, March 1980: Several maps and written inventory included in the 1980 IWIR--maps that describe photographic points, maps that identify intrusions (other than vehicle routes), county highway maps, maps labeled as IWIR maps, photocopied U.S. Geological Survey 7.5-minute series maps, and maps found in the BLM Las Cruces District's *Final Wilderness Inventory Report: Volume II*.

1980 Aerial Photographs: The flight covered the WSAs but not the entire *Decision Area*.

BLM Las Cruces District Office Digitized Transportation, Road, and Trail Inventory: These data are an ongoing Las Cruces District Office inventory of both improved and unimproved roads and trails throughout the Las Cruces District Office area. Transportation system information has been digitized for each 1:24,000 topographic map (7.5 minute).

2.2 Data Interpretation and Review

Using the vehicular routes maps included in the 1980 IWIR as baseline data, all routes were reviewed to match them against and confirm their existence with at least one other data set, historical or current. Most of the routes in the 1980 inventory were easily authenticated. The data include both GPS information and routes digitized from orthographically projected photographic quads and aerial photography.

In some instances, mapped vehicle access routes did not clearly correspond to any route(s) that have been mapped or photographed either on or before the 1980 IWIR. Under these circumstances, available spatial data were interpreted to discover nearby routes bearing a meaningful resemblance in shape and length to the IWIR-mapped route(s). These routes were also relocated and digitized.

In review of the entire record, current conditions on-the-ground can and do vary from the 1980 inventory. Some routes have disappeared or have been revegetated through lack of use, and new routes have appeared as a result of unauthorized use. Unauthorized routes are closed under all alternatives. Photocopies of all maps and the inventory, text, and aerial photographs used can be found at the Las Cruces District Office.

Under Alternative A, C and D, vehicle use is limited to ways that existed at the time the areas were designated as WSAs. For all but two of the WSAs, this designation occurred in 1980. The Organ Needles and Peña Blanca WSAs occurred in 1993. Ways that have been developed since the areas were designated as WSAs are “*closed*”. Under Alternative B, all ways are “*closed*”.

3 ACEC EXISTING ROUTE INVENTORY AND AREA DESIGNATION

Existing vehicle routes in Areas of Critical Environmental Concern (ACEC) were determined from the BLM Las Cruces District geographic database. This database is upgraded as new or better information is accumulated. Area designations and closures in ACECs were based on the same criteria identified above. In most cases, area designations varied for each of the ACECs across the alternatives. Table O-2 lists the ACECs and management actions proposed under each alternative.

**TABLE O-2
ROUTE DESIGNATIONS IN ACECS BY ALTERNATIVE**

ACEC NAME	ALTERNATIVE A	ALTERNATIVE B	ALTERNATIVE C	ALTERNATIVE D
Aden Lava Flow Research Natural Area	Existing (Map J-7)	Existing (Map J-7)	No ACEC	No ACEC
Organ/Franklin Mountains	Existing (Maps J-8,9)			
Los Tules	Existing (Map J-10)			
Robledo Mountains	Existing (Map J-11)			
Doña Ana Mountains	Existing (Map J-12)			
Rincon	Existing (Map J-13)			
San Diego Mountain	Existing (Map J-14)			
Three Rivers Petroglyphs	Existing (Map J-15)			
Sacramento Escarpment	Existing (Map J-16)			
Cornudas Mountain	Existing (Map J-17)			
Alamo Mountain	Existing (Map J-18)			
Wind Mountain	Existing (Map J-19)			
Alkali Lakes	Existing (Map J-20)			
Broad Canyon	No ACEC	Existing (Map J-21)	No ACEC	No ACEC
Tortugas Mountain	No ACEC	Existing (Map J-22)	No ACEC	No ACEC
Brokeoff Mountain	No ACEC	Existing (Map J-23, 24)	Existing (Map J-25)	No ACEC
Cornucopia	No ACEC	Existing (Map J-26)	No ACEC	No ACEC
Pup Canyon	No ACEC	Existing (Map J-27)		No ACEC
Sacramento Mountains, North and South	No ACEC	Existing (Map J-28)		No ACEC
Six Shooter Canyon	No ACEC	Existing (Map J-29)		No ACEC
Tularosa Creek	No ACEC	Existing (Map J-30)	No ACEC	No ACEC
Van Winkle Lake	No ACEC	Existing (No Map)		No ACEC
Jarilla Mountains	No ACEC	Existing (Map J-31)	No ACEC	No ACEC
Caballo Mountains	No ACEC	Existing (Map J-32)	No ACEC	No ACEC
Mud Mountain	No ACEC	Existing (Map J-33)		No ACEC
Nutt Mountain	No ACEC	Existing (Map J-34)	No ACEC	No ACEC
Picacho Peak	No ACEC	Existing (Map J-36)		No ACEC
Southern Caballo Mountains	No ACEC	Existing (Map J-37)	No ACEC	No ACEC
Percha Creek	No ACEC	Existing (Map J-38)	No ACEC	No ACEC
East Potrillo Mountains	No ACEC	Existing (Map J-39)	No ACEC	No ACEC
Otero Mesa Grassland	No ACEC	Existing (Map J-40)		No ACEC