



**Beaver Dam Wash National Conservation Area**

**National Landscape Conservation System  
FY 2009 Annual Manager's Report**



**Introductory Information:  
Beaver Dam Wash National Conservation Area**

**Utah State Office  
Color Country District  
St. George Field Office  
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435-688-3200  
[www.blm.gov/ut/st/en/fo/st\\_george.html](http://www.blm.gov/ut/st/en/fo/st_george.html)**

**NCA Manager: Position Unfilled At This Time**

**Legal Authority: Omnibus Public Land Management Act of 2009 (P.L. 111-11), signed into law March 30, 2009, as amended by a map included in the 2010 Interior and Environment Appropriations Bill Conference Agreement, October 2009.**

**Total Acres: 63,488 acres  
Estimated Annual Visitation: 20,000**

**Key Resources and Values:**

- **Important Biological, Ecological, Historical, and Scenic Resources**
- **Diverse Recreational Opportunities**

# 1. Physical Condition of Natural, Cultural and Paleontological Resources

## Natural Resources and Trends

The newly-designated Beaver Dam Wash NCA is located in the southwestern corner of Washington County, Utah, along the state lines of Nevada and Arizona. Interstate I-15 and the Virgin River parallel its southern boundary; U.S. Highway 91 is the only paved highway through the NCA. The legislation designating this NCA restricts all motorized vehicle travel, including Off-Highway Vehicles, to designated roads and, in certain areas, only to specific roads shown on the legislative map.

This NCA is within an ecological transition zone between the Mojave Desert and the Great Basin Desert. Creosote bush, white bursage, and other desert shrubs grow at the lower elevations and provide habitat for desert bighorn sheep and the Mojave Desert tortoise, a threatened species listed under the Endangered Species Act. Joshua trees and dense stands of blackbrush cover the slopes of the Beaver Dam Mountains, which rise along the eastern boundary of the NCA. Surface water flows in the upper reaches of Beaver Dam Wash, but rarely travels all the way through the NCA. Riparian vegetation along the stream channel is important habitat for migratory birds and other wildlife. A majority of the land base of the NCA provides critical habitat for Mojave Desert tortoises, a federally-listed threatened species.



## Monitoring and Trends

Mojave Desert tortoise populations and habitat conditions have been monitored by biologists from the Utah Division of Wildlife Resources (UDWR) and the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service (USFWS), as part of long-term studies endorsed by the Desert Tortoise Management Oversight Group to determine whether the objectives of the approved Recovery Plan (1994) are being met. Population trends range-wide for the Mojave Desert tortoise have been difficult to detect, in part due to incompatible data sets, changes in field methodologies, and funding limitations. Sampling transects completed in the Beaver Dam Slope unit, which includes transects in the Beaver Dam Wash NCA, reported 1.2 tortoises per kilometer in 2007 (U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, 2009. *Range-wide Monitoring of the Mojave Population of the Desert Tortoise: 2007 Annual Report*). The estimated density for this unit is lower than that detected by monitoring in 2005, but this may be indicative of changed field methodologies rather than changes in population size.



## **Restoration and Stewardship**

Since 2000, wildfires have damaged habitat in nearly 50% of the Beaver Dam Wash NCA. During the 2005 and 2006 fire seasons, for example, more than 15,000 acres were consumed in 12 fires that burned in the NCA. Here and elsewhere in the Mojave Desert, wildland fires have become more frequent and more catastrophic, consuming thousands of acres of native vegetation that provides habitat for at-risk species. These fires are fueled by invasive grasses, such as cheat grass and red brome, which respond favorably to post-fire conditions, effectively preventing the re-establishment of native species. SGFO has undertaken emergency stabilization and rehabilitation of some of those damaged lands that are above the 4,000 foot contour interval, through late fall aerial re-seeding efforts. Monitoring has shown that re-seeding is generally unsuccessful at lower elevations, as annual precipitation is rarely sufficient to sustain seedlings after germination.

Federal, military, state, and local governmental entities that manage lands in the Mojave Desert are currently funding research and exploring options to prevent wildfires and improve the success of rehabilitation efforts, through the Mojave Desert Initiative (MDI). In 2009, MDI participants visited the Beaver Dam Wash NCA to gather information on the success post fire habitat restoration efforts. American Recovery and Reinvestment Act of 2009 (ARRA) funding was obligated by Utah and Arizona BLM in FY09 to support plant materials research. The focus of the research will be to evaluate the success of selectively bred native and non-native species strains for use in post-fire rehabilitation, with the goal of developing seed strains that propagate quickly and with sufficient vigor to out-compete the invasive grass species. One of the study plots for this research may be located in the Beaver Dam Wash NCA. “Green-stripping” and other hazard fuel reduction projects are proposed along major roadways in the NCA in the future, to lessen the potential for human-caused wild land fires and minimize the spread of all wildfires here.

## **Cultural Resources**

Little is known about the cultural resources of the NCA, as no large scale inventories have yet been completed here. Project-specific inventories have documented sites that date from the Archaic Period (7,000 B.C-300 B.C.); the Formative Period (300 B.C.-1200 A.D.); the

Neo-Archaic Period (1250 A.D.-1700 A.D.) and the Historic Period (1776 A.D. onward). Site condition for a majority of the previously-recorded sites is good, with some impacts resulting from livestock grazing and motorized recreational activities. Rock shelters and caves with cultural deposits that have been documented often show some evidence of vandalism and looting.

### **National Historic Trails**

The Old Spanish Trail National Historic Trail (OST) traverses the Beaver Dam Wash NCA, with the Main Branch of the OST believed to have followed an alignment that is today the corridor for U.S. Highway 91. The Armijo Route of the OST very likely followed Bulldog Canyon, along the southeastern boundary of the NCA.

### **Historic Highways**

One of the first interstate automobile routes traverses the Beaver Dam Wash NCA, following the alignment of U.S. Highway 91. Developed to encourage destination tourism in the early 1900s, the unpaved “Arrowhead [Trails] Highway” was sponsored by touring clubs in southern California and southern Nevada and local business in southern Utah. The artifacts and structures of early service stations that supplied water, gasoline, tire repair and overnight camping spots to travelers on the Arrowhead Highway have been documented within the NCA.

### **Paleontology:**

The Beaver Dam Mountains are comprised of Kaibab limestone which contains common invertebrate fossils, such as crinoids, corals, and fossilized worm burrows. Solution and tectonic caves are common in these mountains and have yet to be systematically inventoried for values.

### **Wilderness**

There are no designated wilderness areas within the Beaver Dam Wash NCA. The approximately 1,000 acre Joshua Tree Instant Study Area is located within the boundaries of the NCA; this area was designated as a National Natural Landmark by the National Park Service in 1966. The Utah portion of the Beaver Dam Mountains Wilderness lies to the southeast of the NCA.

## **2. Recreation Facilities, Roads, and Trailheads/Trails**

Recreational use of the Beaver Dam Wash NCA includes casual, dispersed camping, Off-Highway Vehicle (OHV) riding, rock climbing, equestrian trail riding, and hunting for game birds, mule deer, and desert bighorn sheep.

**Total Estimated FY 09 Visitor Use Days: 20,000**

### **Roads:**

U.S. Highway 91 bisects the Beaver Dam Wash NCA and is the only paved road in this unit. A network of BLM and county-maintained roads, and user-created two- tracks, provide access to range improvements, bird and big-game guzzlers, and popular areas for bird and

deer hunting. Three major utility corridors, excluded from the NCA, contain roads that access electrical and natural gas transmission lines and fiber-optic cable lines.

### **Trailheads and Trails**

There are currently no developed trails or trailheads in the Beaver Dam Wash NCA.

**Total FY09 Trail Visitor Use Days: N/A**

### **Special Recreation Permits**

SGFO issued 2 commercial Special Recreation Permits for the Beaver Dam Wash NCA in FY 09, generating approximately \$350 from SRP fees

## **3. Outreach, Environmental Education, Interpretation, and Volunteers**

### **Website:**

An NCA-specific website has not yet been developed. The SGFO website has links to information about the Beaver Dam Wash NCA, including maps and information about designated roads in this unit.

### **Fact Sheets and Brochures:**

SGFO prepared a Fact Sheet that provides information about the resource values of the newly-designated NCA, with a map showing location and boundaries of the new unit. A second Fact Sheet focuses on hunting in the NCA, as it relates to the required use of designated roads in the three geographic areas of the NCA. Both Fact Sheets are available in the Public Room of the SGFO and are also posted on the SGFO website.

### **Visitor Use Maps:**

SGFO has drafted a Special Edition 100K Visitor Use Map that will include visitor information about the Beaver Dam Wash NCA on the brochure side of the map. The reverse side will be a 100K topographic and land status map of Washington County, with all the new NLCS units designated by P.L. 111-11, as well as other popular recreation trails, special management areas, and interpretive sites. Cartography, design, editing, and printing of 10,000 copies of the new map will be completed by the NOC in 2010.

### **Resource Interpretation:**

Resource interpretation programs have not yet been developed for the newly-designated NCA.

### **Volunteer Programs:**

Volunteer programs have not yet been developed for the Beaver Dam Wash NCA.

### **Sign Plan**

The Beaver Dam Wash NCA sign plan has not yet been initiated. A portal graphic was

developed by the NOC and two portal signs have been fabricated by the BLM Rawlins Sign Shop. These will be installed in 2010, with funding for the portal bases provided by ARRA.

#### **4. Science**

As described above, the USFWS oversees monitoring of Mojave Desert tortoise populations in the Beaver Dam Slope sub-unit of the Northeastern Mojave Recovery Unit. Transect inventories are conducted biennially, with a total of 21 distance sampling transects being completed in the Beaver Dam Wash NCA in 2009.

#### **5. Partnerships**

Since NCA designation on March 30, 2009, SFGO has begun negotiations with the Arizona Strip Interpretive Association about the possibility of that group expanding its focus to include the Beaver Dam Wash NCA.

#### **Advisory Committee**

There has not been adequate time to plan for or charter a FACA Advisory Committee,. Establishing partner and Advisory Committee relationships will be pursued during the planning process to develop a new Management Plan for the Beaver Dam Wash NCA.

### **Planning and Business Practices**

#### **Planning:**

P.L. 111-11 mandated that a Management Plan for the Beaver Dam Wash NCA be completed within 3 years after designation. In May of 2009, the SGFO prepared a Preliminary Pre-Plan that was submitted to WO-210 to help secure 1610 in FY10. A Statement of Work was completed and a contract awarded to the environmental contracting services firm Booze, Allen, Hamilton to assist SGFO in the preparation of the NCA Management Plan, as well as a focused plan amendment to the SGFO RMP to address other mandates from P.L.111-11. A *Federal Register* Notice of Intent is slated for publication in April, 2010, with public scoping to follow shortly thereafter. Cooperating agencies for the planning effort to develop the Beaver Dam Wash NCA Management Plan will include Washington County and Mojave County, Arizona. Other entities that will be directly involved in this planning include: the Shiwvits Band of the Paiute Indian Tribe, the Paiute Indian Tribe of Utah, and the State of Utah's Resource Development Coordination Committee and Public Lands Policy Committee.

Preliminary Planning Issues: Recreation Opportunities; Travel Management, Scientific, Educational, and Research Opportunities; Identification and Conservation of Priority Biological Areas, through new ACEC nominations; Livestock Grazing, and Land Acquisitions.

#### **Annual Expenditures and Work Years**

FY09 Base Funding: \$70,000

One-Time Flex Funding: \$ 100,000

SGFO began the recruitment process for the following positions for Beaver Dam NCA in 2009, with all positions to be filled in early 2010. These positions will also be assigned to the newly-designated Red Cliffs NCA:

- Park Ranger (1 FTE)
- Biologist (.5 FTE)
- Outdoor Recreation Planner (.5FTE)
- NCA Manager (.5 FTE)
- Law Enforcement Ranger (.5FTE)

**Receipts from Special Recreation Permits:** \$350

**Report Compiled by:** Dawna Ferris-Rowley, SGFO Assistant FOM, David Kiel, Outdoor Recreation Planner

**Report Compilation Time:** 10 hours of staff time were devoted to preparation of this report.