

Bureau of Land Management
Quarterly Report
March 27, 2013

1. Route Monitoring and Compliance

a. Baseline of Routes Geodatabase – Update from December 2012 Quarterly Report

The West Mojave (WEMO) Plan area contains approximately 5,000 miles of designated routes. BLM implemented a monitoring plan by monitoring 100% of the routes in the WEMO Plan area. Specifically, during the baseline data collection that was completed in 2012, the BLM drove the designated open network and collected quantitative data on the number of current incursions (and associated feature information). This 2012 incursion dataset is considered the “complete” inventory for statistical comparison purposes. This inventory is stored in a geodatabase geographic information systems (GIS) data format. The baseline inventory will not only be used in the designation process for the WEMO Plan Amendment/Environmental Impact Statement (PA/EIS), but also will be examined to determine route non-compliance (i.e., identifying incursions along designated routes) and to establish the baseline for identification of new incursions. With baseline data for non-compliance on current closed routes and the numbers and locations of incursions identified, future compliance will be determined by monitoring a statistically valid sample of designated routes.

b. Summary of Monitoring/Enforcement Effort – Update from December 2012 Quarterly Report

Barstow Field Office

There are six Law Enforcement (LE) Rangers, one LE Ranger trainee, and two Supervisory LE Rangers in the Barstow Field Office (BFO). For the 2012-2013 OHV season, the Barstow LE Rangers had 347 compliance checks (e.g., wilderness, Area of Critical Environmental Concern) and conducted 321 enforcement contacts, of which 54 pertained to off route or closed area motor vehicle violations.

Ridgecrest Field Office

There are five LE Rangers and one Supervisory LE Ranger in the Ridgecrest Field Office (RFO). Ridgecrest LE Rangers prioritized OHV patrol and enforcement activities throughout the 2012-2013 OHV season to effect 250 individual wilderness and Area of Critical Environmental Concern compliance checks and conduct 185 enforcement contacts, of which approximately 50 pertained to off route or closed area motor vehicle violations.

Law Enforcement Overview

Law enforcement provides for public safety and protects public land. During the winter months, the period of this quarterly report, large influxes of OHV enthusiasts from the

nearby urban areas gather in the desert region on weekends and during major holidays. Partially funded by annual grants from the California State Parks Department (OHV Division), LE Rangers patrol wilderness boundaries, the designated vehicle route network and open OHV areas to ensure compliance with applicable state and federal laws and regulations governing OHV use. During the busiest holiday weekends (e.g., Thanksgiving, New Year's and President's Day) LE Rangers from neighboring BLM offices supplement patrol efforts.

BLM Rangers coordinate with other federal agencies, local police, fish and wildlife, state parks, and County sheriff department officers to provide for enhanced law enforcement coverage during busy weekends, special recreation events, and emphasis patrols. Additional funding from the United States Forest Service provides for patrol activities along segments of the Pacific Crest Trail traversing public lands managed by the Ridgecrest Field Office. LE Rangers patrol using four-wheel drive and all-terrain vehicles, some of which were purchased and equipped with OHV grant funding, in order to detect, deter, interdict and prosecute OHV violators found to be traveling off route or within areas closed to motor vehicle use.

LE Rangers provide outreach and education as well as enforcement services, proactively contacting OHV users within concentrated camping areas to provide maps and information. In addition to OHV outreach and education, LE Rangers respond to incidents of trash and hazardous waste dumping, archaeological resource theft, wild horse and burro compliance, grazing, mining, land use and occupancy concerns, special recreation permit monitoring, wildland fire incidents, marijuana cultivation activities, public meeting security, and search and rescue incidents that may also arise during periods of OHV activity within the field offices. LE Rangers must conduct numerous hours of required training and recertification, file necessary reports and administrative paperwork and occasionally work on detail assignments outside their respective field offices.

**c. Maintenance and Restoration Actions – Update from December 2012
Quarterly Report**

Barstow Field Office

Within the Juniper Flats subregion, maintenance of kiosks, signing and a quarter mile of fencing was installed.

Ridgecrest Field Office

Within the El Paso subregion, seven Limited Use Area signs were placed at the beginning of designated roads where the routes depart from the paved Kern County Brown Road.

Within the Ridgecrest subregion, approximately 75 feet of hard barrier was installed to direct vehicle traffic onto the properly designated route.

Fence repair was completed on the Desert Tortoise Research Natural Area, and post and cable barriers were repaired near the Rand Glamis Gold interpretive overlook site within the Rand subregion.

Friends of Jawbone (FOJ) have 12 employees that work full time in the Jawbone, Rands, Red Mountain, and El Paso subregions. FOJ staff performs ground operation and maintenance work including, but not limited to, signing, fencing, grading roads, and repairing structures that have been vandalized. The Friends of Jawbone also have a person working at the Jawbone Station to provide information to the public on OHV areas and designated routes. The funding source is from California OHV grants.

Two seven-person Student Conservation Association teams worked on restoration efforts to reduce vehicle trespass into the Owens Peak, Kiavah, Golden Valley, and Grass Valley Wilderness areas, along with monitoring and retreating previous work efforts within the El Paso Mountains Wilderness. Tasks that these crews have performed include vertical mulching, seed pitting, signing, erosion control structures, berms, and hard barriers, including fence lines.

d. Monitoring Compliance with Route Closures at a Statistically Significant Level – Update from December 2012 Quarterly Report

A pilot test of the methods and data proposed for the statistical monitoring protocol was designed with a field testing component; field testing will begin the first week of April, 2013 (next week). The pilot test will address Black Mountain. BLM finalized the pilot test protocol, attached, after review and comment by Plaintiffs.

The BLM estimates that the pilot test of Black Mountain will take three weeks to complete. The BLM has offered to have Plaintiff observers present during the field work for the pilot test.

Once the field work is complete, the results will be used to inform and finalize the methods and variables of the statistical sampling monitoring protocol. BLM expects the statistical sampling monitoring protocol to be finalized by the beginning to mid-May, 2013. Once the statistical sampling monitoring protocol is finalized based upon the results of the Black Mountain pilot test, BLM will establish implementation priorities and an implementation schedule for the whole of the WEMO plan area. These priorities and this schedule will be shared with Plaintiffs. Field implementation will take place once the statistical sampling monitoring protocol is finalized and implementation priorities and an implementation schedule is developed. BLM expects to begin field implementation of the statistical sampling monitoring protocol by summer 2013; BLM will inform Plaintiffs as the date becomes more definite.

The information gathered from the Black Mountain pilot test, the refinements to the statistical sampling monitoring protocol, any additional information gathered from implementation of the statistical sampling monitoring protocol, and the monitoring plan information gathered to date will be used in the development of a monitoring plan to be

incorporated into the WEMO reassessment. In addition, all of this information will be used, and will continue to be used by the BLM in its adaptive efforts to avoid, minimize, mitigate, and curtail unauthorized OHV use in the WEMO plan area.

e. Monitoring of Vehicle-Limited Use Routes in WEMO Area – Update from December 2012 Quarterly Report

MONITORING

Barstow Field Office

A law enforcement emphasis patrol in the Juniper Flats subregion occurred on January 26-27, 2013. On January 26, 2013, there were three Rangers, one Forest Service Law Enforcement Officer with a K9, and one BLM Ranger trainee on duty. On January 27, 2013, there were four Rangers and one Ranger trainee on duty. The Rangers observed moderate OHV use of the area with some off-route tracks with multiple contacts made for that violation. During January 26-27, 2013, rangers made 100 contacts, 31 warnings, eight (8) citations and one (1) arrest.

Ridgecrest Field Office

BLM Law Enforcement Rangers, along with the Friends of Jawbone work crew, regularly monitor the limitation barriers previously constructed on the designated Motorcycle Only routes within the Jawbone subregion.

ACCESS CONTROL

Barstow Field Office

Installation of vehicle restricting gates and signs on open routes in the Juniper Flats subregion was delayed from February to April 2013, as the youth conservation corps crew was redirected by their organization to work on a project in another BLM Field Office.

REHABILITATION

Ridgecrest Field Office

Two seven-person Student Conservation Association Restoration teams continued working on completing restoration efforts within the Jawbone and Rand Mountain subregions.

Friends of Jawbone have 12 employees that work full time in the Jawbone, Rands, Red Mountain, and El Paso subregions conducting daily monitoring and rehabilitation of unauthorized routes.

In the Kelso Valley area near the Pacific Crest Trail and Saint John's Ridge fencing and restoration efforts were performed. These efforts were in response to video surveillance that showed disregard for posted signs and previous motor vehicle control efforts.



Before: St. John's Ridge



After: St. John's Ridge

f. Court Order Site Visit

Barstow and Ridgecrest Field Offices

In accordance with the October 2012 Court Order regarding enforcement of remedies, a site visit of illustrative areas of the WEMO was conducted on February 12 through February 14, 2013 for the Magistrate Judge, accompanied by representatives of Plaintiffs and BLM. An overview flight occurred, which provided an overview of 29 Palms, Juniper Flats, Johnson Valley, Edwards Bowl, Coolgardie Mesa, Red Mountain, Rands, El Paso, Jawbone and Kelso Valley. There were also two days of a ground tour, which included site visits to El Paso, Rands, Red Mountain, Coolgardie Mesa, Juniper Flats, and Edwards Bowl. The air and ground tours, including logistics, took three weeks of BLM preparation time and fourteen BLM personnel. The WEMO site visit itinerary is attached.

2. Kiosks – Update from December 2012 Quarterly Report

Barstow Field Office

BLM continues to coordinate with the Citizens of Wonder Valley (COW) and the Friends of Copper Mountain to address the issue of OHV trespass on private lands. One of their proposed solutions is to install a kiosk at the intersection of Highway 247 and Richie Road, near Landers, California. One of the COW members owns the piece of property at Highway 247 and Richie Road, and offered the BLM the use of the land for a kiosk. The map proposed to be installed at that kiosk will identify public and private land, and will direct OHV users to the Johnson Valley and Stoddard Wells OHV Open Areas. The kiosk will also have safety and respecting private property right information. Before this kiosk is installed, due to code enforcement, a permit must be obtained from the County of San Bernardino, as well as an easement from the private landowner.

Ridgecrest Field Office

One new kiosk was installed at the intersection of Trona Road and the Spangler South Boundary Road in the Spangler Hill subregion.

As part of an Eagle Scout project, new kiosks were planned to be installed at the Brown Road Trailhead and at the intersection of RM143 and Navy Road. Due to an inability to obtain donated materials for these kiosks, this Eagle Scout project fell through and the workload of installing these kiosks returned to BLM and is scheduled to be implemented by June 2013.

Barstow and Ridgecrest Field Offices

Staff continues to work on the upkeep and repair of the existing kiosks located throughout the West Mojave Management Area. Efforts performed include the replacing of large updated subregion maps, posting of notices, painting, replacement of Plexiglas, and structural repair.

3. Proper Functioning Condition – Seeps and Springs – Update from December 2012 Quarterly Report

Proper Functioning Condition (PFC) Assessments will be conducted April to June 2013, which is prime assessment season to appropriately evaluate plant life budding and leafing and animal and insect emergence and usage after winter dormancy. Erosion evaluation is also best conducted after the winter rainy season. In addition, flow is at a maximum for seeps and springs.

4. Air Quality – Update from December 2012 Quarterly Report

BLM continues to be in contact with the Mojave Desert Air Quality Management District (MDAQMD). The MDAQMD intends to provide a report to BLM on air quality monitoring in the WEMO Plan area for the five air quality districts on or before September 2013.

5. Mojave Fringe-Toed Lizard – Update from December 2012 Quarterly Report

Survey season for the Mojave fringe-toed lizard (MFTL) will begin in April 2013. The MFTL are cold-blooded, and dormant (i.e, bury in the sand) from generally around October 1 to April 1. The MFTL begin to emerge with ground temperatures of 90 degrees, which can begin as early as April, which makes April to June prime survey season.

6. Chronology of Management Actions – Update to December 2012 Quarterly Report

January 3, 2013: Procurement process closed for contract to develop a monitoring protocol for the West Mojave area.

January 17, 2013: Contract awarded for statistical services to develop a monitoring protocol for the West Mojave area.

January 22, 2013: Initial meeting with contractor to provide a field tour and discuss the monitoring protocol contract scope of work and timeline.

February 5, 2013: Contractor provided sample analyses with some protocol options based on the field visit and the January 22, 2013 discussion. BLM discussed and provided guidance for outstanding statistical questions.

February 7, 2013: Meeting with contractor to discuss scope of work for the WEMO PA/EIS socioeconomic workshop.

February 11, 2013: Contractor provided revised analysis for review.

February 12-14, 2013: Three day site-visit of illustrative areas of WEMO with United States Magistrate Judge Nandor Vadas, and representatives of Plaintiffs and BLM. The three-day visit took three weeks of BLM planning during the time period of this Quarterly Report.

February 18, 2013: Contractor provided BLM with draft pilot of monitoring protocol.

February 19, 2013: A briefing and request for additional dialogue on the WEMO PA/EIS was provided at the Big Pine Tribal Council by BLM Ridgecrest Field Manager.

February 22, 2013: Follow-up from BLM to Plaintiffs regarding their request for pilot of monitoring protocol at the three-day site visit. BLM provided pilot of monitoring protocol to Plaintiffs.

February 23, 2013: Meeting with Desert Advisory Council (DAC) West Mojave Route Designation Project Subgroup to discuss the outline for and contents of a report incorporating public data and subgroup recommendations to be forwarded in a report to the DAC, for their DAC approval and consideration by the BLM District Manager.

February 28, 2013: Follow-up call to Plaintiff regarding their comments on pilot of monitoring protocol.

March 4, 2013: BLM provided comments back to Plaintiff regarding the pilot of monitoring protocol.

March 5, 2013: Meeting with United States Fish and Wildlife Service (USFWS), California Department of Fish and Wildlife (CDFW) and BLM for coordination and consultation on the WEMO PA/EIS. A draft Memorandum of Understanding was provided to USFWS for their consideration to become a cooperating agency in the EIS.

March 6, 2013: Meeting with USFWS to discuss status and strategies for the Lane Mountain Milk Vetch (LMMV) and other recently designated critical habitat in the Coolgardie Mesa subregion.

March 18, 2013: Telecon with Plaintiffs and BLM, and BLM provided Plaintiff with final pilot of monitoring protocol.

March 25, 2013: Follow-up meeting with DAC West Mojave Route Designation Project Subgroup to continue development of their report for the DAC, for their approval and consideration by the BLM District Manager.

7. Attached Files

Pilot Test of Monitoring Sampling and Protocol (3/27/2013)
West Mojave (WEMO) Site Visit Itinerary