

March 27, 2010

Re: Application G09-03-31-501  
KCFD Request for Grant

As referenced above, I am writing in regards to the OHV grant the Kern County Fire Dept. is seeking. I have respect for the KCFD, but this is one of the most ludicrous ideas I have ever heard. Why should my tax dollars be used even more than they already are to help subsidize irresponsible people who have literally destroyed miles and miles of desert surrounding the Dove Springs and Jawbone Canyon areas?

I have lived in this general region of the desert my entire 67 years of life. I recall driving through both of these areas when I was a child with my parents, then later with my husband and children...they were both beautiful and serene. Now they are scarred beyond belief and wildlife (including desert tortoises) is almost nonexistent.

I was aware that this all began to change quite some time ago when motorcyclists (mostly from L.A.) began to invade these and other desert areas but hadn't seen them for a few years. Then we took a drive through Dove Springs this past February, and we were utterly amazed to see the devastation to the desert and the total chaos. Children (sometimes unaccompanied by adults) and other adults were driving OHV's in all directions, sometimes very fast and in a reckless manner; no wonder they have so many accidents. We passed a camp with approximately 10 sheriff cars, SUV's and OHV's. We commented to each other about all of the expense to Kern County.

It is beyond my comprehension as to why this was allowed in the first place, but this issue of applying for a grant to use for emergency medical facilities/vehicles and our recent visit has caused me to get on my "soapbox."

Rather than approving this grant for the purposes mentioned, I would suggest the following:

1. Create smaller, more controlled areas with rules. You may say that there are far too many people for one smaller area—then these people should be required to apply for space, similar to the method used at State beach campgrounds. When it's full, try again some other time.
2. Charge the participants fees that will cover the costs for:
  - a. BLM and Sheriff's Department to patrol and enforce the rules, which should significantly decrease accidents and injuries.
  - b. All of the items that the KCFD states that would be purchased with the \$190,000 grant.
  - c. The costs associated with transporting those who are injured by auto or air ambulance.

I think it's time that these people come to the realization that it isn't acceptable to destroy so much land and that there are no "free rides." I'm not against recreation, but I'm adamantly opposed to one group of people ruining the desert for everyone else.

The Government should be protecting the desert, not paying enormous amounts of money to help promote its destrucion. And if this grant is given to KCFD for these two areas, will they be requesting another one for Searles Station area, another for Randsburg area, California City, etc.?

In my opinion, it's time to put a stop to this nonsense!

Mary Noh – Ridgecrest, CA

