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April 3, 2014

**To the State of California OHV Grants Program:**

**Comment re: *Baldy Mesa OHV Project Application by USFS for Trails/Staging Area Development***

**c. Cultural Resources (Page 3) - Q 2.**

c. Cultural Resources 5

(Check the one most appropriate) (Please select one from list)

Project would provide additional protection to cultural sites (5 points)

Project Area has no known cultural sites (4 points)

Identified cultural sites in the Project Area will not be affected (3 points)

Project impacts to cultural sites will be mitigated (No points)

Analysis has not been completed/unknown (No points)

**Project has unavoidable detrimental impacts to cultural resources  
(No points, Project application will be returned to Applicant without further consideration)**

Provide name and date of reference document:

Additional protection to cultural resource sites would occur by eliminating and restoring unauthorized trails and capping existing and newly located sites that are located along designated route.

The information is located in the Baldy Mesa OHV Trails and Staging Area Environmental Assessment and Decision Notice and Finding of No Significant Impact signed September 27, 2013. It is also located in the SBNF Heritage Resources Programmatic Agreement Project Form ? Section 106 Certification Report dated September 18, 2013.

**Page 14 of 19 from USFS Grant Application for Trails/Staging**

**The above table contains the response information provide by the USFS on page 14 of 19 by the USFS regarding Question 2 (C) Trails/Staging Area Grant Request**

In response to the Question, the **USFS responded that "Project would provide additional protection to cultural sites" and claimed 5 points for the response.**

**This answer is factually incorrect.** While the proposed project may provide additional protections for **some** cultural sites, as currently planned the OHV track obviously has very serious detrimental and unavoidable impacts to the historic Sanford/Mormon trail. While the reference documents cited in the USFS answer do not mention the trail, we now all know of its existence and significance and it must not be degraded and ultimately destroyed. To preserve the trail means to protect it and make it accessible to hikers, equestrians and the like. To have it intersected twice by an OHV track is simply unacceptable. In addition, a portion of the trail will be isolated within the OHV track and risks being obliterated by OHV user created cross-tracks. This is simply an unworkable plan and threatens the future existence of the historic trail

The USFS is well aware of how very concerned local residents, historians and historical organizations are about this aspect of the project, and are all vigorously opposed to it. **Case in point: the 500 or so petitions** that have been signed on the Mormon-Trail.com website that oppose the project for this very reason. Those petitions are being submitted concurrently and must be considered as relevant facts in the review and evaluation of this grant request. As far as I am aware, the USFS has not consulted with any local, regional or national historians regarding this ill-conceived idea of bisecting the trail (twice) and isolating a portion of it within an OHV track loop.

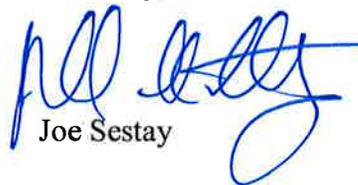
We, the local residents and others concerned about the trail, have repeatedly brought this concern to the attention of the USFS' attention to no avail. This issue was raised directly to the USFS during the project planning and appeal period. The USFS refused to modify their plan to protect and preserve the historic trail, and this grant request continues their obstinacy.

It seems very apparent that **the only correct answer** to the above questions is:

**(X) Project has unavoidable detrimental impacts to cultural resources**

As such, as stated in the Questionnaire, **the USFS should receive zero points for this question and the Project application should be returned to the USFS without further consideration.**

Sincerely,



Joe Sestay