

1. Project Description

A. Statement of GO Activity

This grant application refers to ground operations for monitoring the progress of BLM management decisions made in the Record of Decision (ROD) for the Proposed Northern and Eastern Colorado (NECO) Desert Coordinated Management Plan of 2002 amending the California Desert Conservation Area Plan of 1980. In the ROD, BLM California leadership established criteria for managing OHV access and travel on BLM public lands covering old-growth Sonoran Desert thorn woodlands (also known as "microphyll" woodlands). The BLM California Desert District is applying for funding to monitor and quantify compliance on the part of OHV riders as an indicator of the effectiveness of current BLM wash management that uses large-scale wash zones designated either as open, seasonally limited, or closed to OHV travel and access. The US Fish and Wildlife Service and PRBO Conservation Science are providing information on wildlife responses in these habitats.

Sufficient time has passed since implementation of BLM policy for motorized recreation in Sonoran Desert washes to examine the effectiveness of current policy direction. BLM is applying for partial funding to support the desert wash monitoring project. This project covers the following activities:

1. OHV program leads and wildlife biologists from the BLM California Desert District and the three BLM field offices managing NECO washes form a working group to collaboratively determine the NECO-area wide indicator variables to measure OHV vehicle traffic and impacts to environmental features (for example, banks of washes, damage to vegetation) in desert washes, both open and closed to OHV travel and access.
2. The BLM working group will stratify portions of the NECO-area landscape for statistical testing according to key factors such as status of a wash zone as open or closed, wash vegetation type (woodland vs. non-woodland), topographic position, or other features that the working group deems essential.
3. The BLM California Desert District will contract with the US Geological Survey (USGS) for support to the wash working group in collaborative development of a statistically valid monitoring design and protocol with sufficient sample sizes and statistical power to provide high-quality information for BLM policy makers about the effectiveness of BLM. The USGS team will consist of a geomorphologist, a desert ecologist, and a statistician at a minimum.
4. BLM OHV recreation staff from each of the three NECO field offices will monitor washes according to statistical design and protocol in January 2010 in the middle of the high-use OHV winter riding season.
5. Ecologists from the USGS will conduct randomized quality control to validate field data within established standards for data quality and assure that data entry is flawless.
6. USGS will statistically analyze data collected under the auspices of the BLM working group according to predetermined statistical tests and summarize their findings and interpretations of results in a USGS Open-File report readily accessible for BLM managers and the general public. The data should be of sufficient quality to produce at least one peer-reviewed journal article reporting on OHV use and any impacts, if present, to the ecological integrity of Sonoran Desert washes.

B. Relation of Proposed Project to OHV Recreation

The Proposed Northern and Eastern Colorado (NECO) Desert Coordinated Management Plan of 2002 amended the California Desert Conservation Area Plan of 1980. A major focus of the NECO Plan concerns OHV travel and access in desert washes on Bureau of Land Management (BLM) public lands in eastern Imperial, Riverside, and San Bernardino counties managed from the El Centro, Palm Springs, and Needles field offices respectively. The Record of Decision (ROD) for the NECO Plan stipulated that BLM would designate desert washes outside of both previously closed areas (for example, wildernesses) and current OHV open areas as either closed or open to OHV travel. The decision called for closure of 10% of "navigable" washes (that is, washes feasible for OHV travel) of the landbase. The ROD considered this amount equitable in light of the fact that about 50% of the California Desert Conservation Area at the time was already

designated as closed to OHV travel and access.

Desert washes potentially accessible by motorized vehicles are especially extensive in tracts of Sonoran Desert thorn woodland, which occurs predominantly in washes in the NECO planning area. BLM California leadership considered identifying individual wash routes for inclusion in the NECO inventory of designated closed and open washes as unreasonable given the scarce personnel and funding at BLM to undertake wash designation. Law enforcement on a wash-by-wash basis, signing, and sign maintenance were also cost considerations.

BLM leadership decided to implement a landscape ecological approach to wash designation. This approach saw the greatest benefit to desert wildlife, particularly Desert Tortoises, if large tracts of desert washes were off-limits to OHV riding. OHV riders would also benefit from knowing that large defined areas defined as open were available for travel and access. In this way, riders could ride in navigable washes in designated "open wash zones" or "limited wash zones" (seasonally open for riding) without risk of unintentionally riding in a navigable closed wash, which may have adequate signing of open or closed designations. Washes previously designated as open OHV routes in the NECO route inventory, regardless of subsequent designation of open, limited, and closed wash zones would remain available for OHV travel and have clear BLM OHV route signing.

Sonoran Desert washes in the NECO Plan area provide motorized-vehicle access for hunting, sightseeing, nature study, backcountry camping, and arrival at wilderness boundaries. These washes also constitute important habitat for many wildlife species listed under the Federal and State of California endangered species acts, for example, Desert Tortoise, Gilded Flicker, Gila Woodpecker, Elf Owl, and Arizona Bell's Vireo. Closed wash zones concentrate in Desert Wildlife Management Areas (DWMAs) established in the Desert Tortoise (Mojave Population) Recovery Plan.

No published or available studies from BLM, other federal and state wildlife agencies, and non-governmental research and advocacy organizations have yet examined how effectively BLM management of open and closed washes is benefitting wildlife and to what extent unauthorized riding is occurring in the closed wash zones. BLM and the public need to know through monitoring the NECO washes using a rigorous and economical statistical design to sample randomly across desert wash zones, whether open/limited or closed. This information can help to fine-tune or redirect BLM desert wash management to meet multiple-use ecological and recreational services for the American public.

By monitoring and refining the designation of open wash zone routes, in the Colorado Desert, BLM will have an accurate assessment of the potential impacts to the desert tortoise and its critical habitat. BLM will be able to understand which routes are the most popular in the extensive and complex wash systems and which routes are best for hunting access, loop rides and camping destinations. The benefits to OHV recreation are higher-quality and safer OHV sport riding, touring opportunities, and improved multiple-use capability with OHV recreation through landscape planning and design.

C. Size of the Project

The NECO planning area extends over five million acres extending from Interstate Highway 40 in the eastern third of San Bernardino County south through eastern Riverside County, to, but not including, the Imperial Sand Dunes Recreation Management Area and Mexico. BLM public lands in California along the lower Colorado River managed by the Lake Havasu and Yuma field office are not part of the planning area. A map attached to this grant application outlines the NECO planning area and the zones of closed and open washes within the planning area. Washes, often expansive, comprise five to ten percent of the NECO planning area.

The NECO plan area contains 4,743 miles of open routes.

The NECO plan area contains 359,093 acres of washes closed zones, all within the desert wildlife management areas, which is primarily critical habitat for the desert tortoise.

D. Location and description of OHV opportunities

The NECO planning area region consists of remote locations amid the rugged mountain terrain in eastern Imperial, Riverside, and San Bernardino counties, all counties with huge, unique OHV recreation resources on BLM public lands. These public lands offer for urban Californians an alternative riding environment of solitude, broad landscape vistas, clear

skies, and starry nights.

Each BLM field office in the planning area maintains travel networks of designated OHV route networks for touring and technical riding. Chemehuevi Wash, a wash complex that is twelve or more miles wide at places has been a popular OHV riding area for than 40 years with motorcyclists and 4x4 vehicle riders.

BLM public lands in the Riverside County of the NECO planning area between Indio and Blythe are increasingly popular area for OHV folks. The BLM Palm Springs Field Office has established the Meccacopia Special Recreation Area (SRA) with a technically challenging route network that provide vehicular access via federally legislated "cherry stem" routes into wildernesses east of City of Indio and the town of Mecca, making wilderness more accessible for more people. Many OHV routes run along wilderness boundaries as well so that people can reach remote destinations for non-motorized recreation, backcountry hiking, and camping in wilderness. Route touring in the Meccacopia SRA through washes with Sonoran Desert thorn woodlands offers a visually rich and unexpectedly verdant setting. East of Highway 117 to Blythe, washes on public lands are open

Imperial County, east of the Imperial Sand Dunes Recreation Management Area, is a gateway to a much less crowded OHV recreation environment affording excellent dove and quail hunting in season. All washes in this part of the county in open zones for OHV riding.

Mindful of the need to locate OHV recreation on public lands near where people live, BLM recreation planners are working on designs for easily accessed OHV recreation areas with a purposefully engineered route network near the cities of Needles and Blythe. These sites will use the best design, engineering, and management principles for sustainable motorized recreation in the NECO planning area.

2. Rerouting Requirements

Rerouting

(a) Does your project involve rerouting of any roads and trails? Yes No

If response to question (a) is 'Yes', a Project timeline, conceptual drawings and site plans are required (See 'Attachments' tab at the top of the screen)

If response to question (a) is 'No', skip details related to rerouting

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1. **Project Timeline (Required if project includes necessary rerouting)**
2. **Conceptual Drawings and Site Plans (Required if project includes necessary rerouting)**
3. **Project-Specific Maps**
Attachments: [NECO washes closed zones](#)
4. **Optional Project-Specific Application Documents**

Project Cost Estimate for Grants and Cooperative Agreements Program - 2008/2009
 Agency: BLM - California Desert District
 Application: CDD OHV Travel for Washes for NECO Plan Compliance

6/2/2009

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APPLICANT NAME :	BLM - California Desert District						
PROJECT TITLE :	CDD OHV Travel for Washes for NECO Plan Compliance	PROJECT NUMBER (Division use only) :					
PROJECT TYPE :	<input type="checkbox"/> Acquisition <input type="checkbox"/> Development <input type="checkbox"/> Education & Safety <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Ground Operations <input type="checkbox"/> Law Enforcement <input type="checkbox"/> Planning <input type="checkbox"/> Restoration						
PROJECT DESCRIPTION :	<p>This grant application refers to ground operations for monitoring the progress of BLM management decisions made in the Record of Decision (ROD) for the Proposed Northern and Eastern Colorado (NECO) Desert Coordinated Management Plan of 2002 amending the California Desert Conservation Area Plan of 1980. In the ROD, BLM California leadership established criteria for managing OHV access and travel on BLM public lands covering old-growth Sonoran Desert thorn woodlands (also known as "microphyll" woodlands). The BLM California Desert District is applying for funding to monitor and quantify compliance on the part of OHV riders as an indicator of the effectiveness of current BLM wash management that uses large-scale wash zones designated either as open, seasonally limited, or closed to OHV travel and access. The US Fish and Wildlife Service and PRBO Conservation Science are providing information on wildlife responses in these habitats.</p> <p>Sufficient time has passed since implementation of BLM policy for motorized recreation in Sonoran Desert washes to examine the effectiveness of current policy direction. BLM is applying for partial funding to support the desert wash monitoring project. This project covers the following activities:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. OHV program leads and wildlife biologists from the BLM California Desert District and the three BLM field offices managing NECO washes form a working group to collaboratively determine the NECO-area wide indicator variables to measure OHV vehicle traffic and impacts to environmental features (for example, banks of washes, damage to vegetation) in desert washes, both open and closed to OHV travel and access. 2. The BLM working group will stratify portions of the NECO-area landscape for statistical testing according to key factors such as status of a wash zone as open or closed, wash vegetation type (woodland vs. non-woodland), topographic position, or other features that the working group deems essential. 3. The BLM California Desert District will contract with the US Geological Survey (USGS) for support to the wash working group in collaborative development of a statistically valid monitoring design and protocol with sufficient sample sizes and statistical power to provide high-quality information for BLM policy makers about the effectiveness of BLM. The USGS team will consist of a geomorphologist, a desert ecologist, and a statistician at a minimum. 4. BLM OHV recreation staff from each of the three NECO field offices will monitor washes according to statistical design and protocol in January 2010 in the middle of the high-use OHV winter riding season. 5. Ecologists from the USGS will conduct randomized quality control to validate field data within established standards for data quality and assure that data entry is flawless. 6. USGS will statistically analyze data collected under the auspices of the BLM working group according to predetermined statistical tests and summarize their findings and interpretations of results in a USGS Open-File report readily accessible for BLM managers and the general public. The data should be of sufficient quality to produce at least one peer-reviewed journal article reporting on OHV use and any impacts, if present, to the ecological integrity of Sonoran Desert washes. 						
	Line Item	Qty	Rate	UOM	Grant Request	Match	Total
DIRECT EXPENSES							

Project Cost Estimate for Grants and Cooperative Agreements Program - 2008/2009
 Agency: BLM - California Desert District
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6/2/2009

	Line Item	Qty	Rate	UOM	Grant Request	Match	Total
Program Expenses							
1	Staff						
	Other-Park Rangers	1600.000	44.050	HRS	0.00	70,480.00	70,480.00
	Other-OHV Coordinators	800.000	62.750	HRS	0.00	50,200.00	50,200.00
	Other-Wildlife Biologists	400.000	51.040	HRS	0.00	20,416.00	20,416.00
	Other-BLM Ecologist	160.000	68.710	HRS	10,994.00	0.00	10,994.00
	Other-CA OHV Program Mgr	40.000	75.080	HRS	0.00	3,003.00	3,003.00
	Other-Administrative/Contract Support	30.000	51.040		0.00	1,531.00	1,531.00
	Other-USGS Ecologists	3.000	3737.600		0.00	11,213.00	11,213.00
	Other-USGS Statisticians	0.500	4666.400		0.00	2,333.00	2,333.00
	Total for Staff				10,994.00	159,176.00	170,170.00
2	Contracts						
	Other-USGS Contract for Protocol Design	1.000	92000.000		92,000.00	0.00	92,000.00
3	Materials / Supplies						
	Other-Transect Tapes	2.000	100.000		0.00	200.00	200.00
	Other-Rangefinders	2.000	400.000		0.00	800.00	800.00
	Total for Materials / Supplies				0.00	1,000.00	1,000.00
4	Equipment Use Expenses						
	Other-USGS Vehicles	1800.000	0.500	MI	0.00	900.00	900.00
	Other-BLM Vehicles	12000.000	0.500	MI	0.00	6,000.00	6,000.00
	Total for Equipment Use Expenses				0.00	6,900.00	6,900.00
5	Equipment Purchases						

Project Cost Estimate for Grants and Cooperative Agreements Program - 2008/2009
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6/2/2009

	Line Item	Qty	Rate	UOM	Grant Request	Match	Total
6	Others						
7	Administrative Costs						
Total Program Expenses					102,994.00	167,076.00	270,070.00
TOTAL DIRECT EXPENSES					102,994.00	167,076.00	270,070.00
TOTAL EXPENDITURES					102,994.00	167,076.00	270,070.00

Project Cost Summary for Grants and Cooperative Agreements Program - 2008/2009
 Agency: BLM - California Desert District
 Application: CDD OHV Travel for Washes for NECO Plan Compliance

6/2/2009

	Line Item	Grant Request	Match	Total	Narrative
DIRECT EXPENSES					
Program Expenses					
1	Staff	10,994.00	159,176.00	170,170.00	
2	Contracts	92,000.00	0.00	92,000.00	
3	Materials / Supplies	0.00	1,000.00	1,000.00	
4	Equipment Use Expenses	0.00	6,900.00	6,900.00	
5	Equipment Purchases	0.00	0.00	0.00	
6	Others	0.00	0.00	0.00	
7	Administrative Costs	0.00	0.00	0.00	
Total Program Expenses		102,994.00	167,076.00	270,070.00	
TOTAL DIRECT EXPENSES		102,994.00	167,076.00	270,070.00	
TOTAL EXPENDITURES		102,994.00	167,076.00	270,070.00	

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ITEM 1 and ITEM 2

ITEM 1

- a. ITEM 1 - Has a CEQA Notice of Determination (NOD) been filed for the Project? Yes No
(Please select Yes or No)

ITEM 2

- b. ITEM 2 - Are the proposed activities a "Project" under CEQA Guidelines Section 15378? Yes No
(Please select Yes or No)
- c. The Application is requesting funds solely for personnel and support to enforce OHV laws and ensure public safety. These activities would not cause any physical impacts on the environment and are thus not a "Project" under CEQA. (Please select Yes or No) Yes No
- d. Other. Explain why proposed activities would not cause any physical impacts on the environment and are thus not a "Project" under CEQA. DO NOT complete ITEMS 3 – 9

Monitoring and provision of educational materials have no physical effect on the environment. All activities associated with this project have been previously analyzed and provided for in previous grants as NEPA and CEQA adequate.

ITEM 3 - Impact of this Project on Wetlands

ITEM 4 - Cumulative Impacts of this Project

ITEM 5 - Soil Impacts

ITEM 6 - Damage to Scenic Resources

ITEM 7 - Hazardous Materials

- Is the proposed Project Area located on a site included on any list compiled pursuant to Section 65962.5 of the California Government Code (hazardous materials)? (Please select Yes or No) Yes No

If YES, describe the location of the hazard relative to the Project site, the level of hazard and the measures to be taken to minimize or avoid the hazards.

ITEM 8 - Potential for Adverse Impacts to Historical or Cultural Resources

- Would the proposed Project have potential for any substantial adverse impacts to historical or cultural resources? (Please select Yes or No) Yes No

If YES, describe the potential impacts and for any substantially adverse changes in the significance of historical or cultural resources and measures to be taken to minimize or avoid the impacts.

ITEM 9 - Indirect Significant Impacts

CEQA/NEPA Attachment

Attachments:

[Wash monitoring NEPA document](#)

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1. Project Cost Estimate - Q 1. (Auto populates from Cost Estimate)

1. As calculated on the Project Cost Estimate, the percentage of the cost of the Project covered by the Applicant is 5

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

- 76% or more (10 points)
 51% - 75% (5 points)
 26% - 50% (3 points)
 25% (Match minimum) (No points)

2. Failure to Complete - Q 2.

2. Failure to complete the Project would result in: 2

(Check all that apply) : Maximum of 8 points (Please select applicable values)

- Loss of OHV Opportunity (6 points)
 Negative impact to cultural sites (2 points)
 Damage to special-status species or other sensitive habitat (2 points)
 Potential trespass (2 points)
 Additional damage to Facilities (1 point)

Explain each statement that was checked

Compliance with the provisions of the NAECO plan with respect to recreation is essential to protect the desert tortoise and other special status species.

3. Sustain OHV Opportunity - Q 3.

3. The Project would sustain OHV Opportunity by 3

(Check all that apply) (Please select applicable values)

- Maintaining trail or road tread (5 points)
 Installing or repairing erosion control features (3 points)
 Providing traffic control and/or educational signage (3 points)
 Maintaining multi use (ATV, Dirt Bikes, 4x4, etc) (1 point)
 Providing varied levels of riding difficulty (1 point)

Explain each statement that was checked

Monitoring NECO washes would indicate whether traffic controls and informational material about closed and open washes for OHV users for riding in desert washes in a responsible and legal manner.

4. Public Input - Q 4.

4. The Project was developed with public input employing the following 2

(Check all that apply) : Maximum of 2 points (Please select applicable values)

- Meeting(s) with the general public to discuss Project (1 point)
 Conference call(s) with interested parties (1 point)
 Meeting(s) with stakeholders (1 point)

Explain each statement that was checked

The Northern and Eastern Colorado Desert Plan amendment to the California Desert Conservation Area Plan was the subject of an Environmental Impact Statement. This process included scoping meetings, public hearings and opportunities for comment on the draft EIS. Dozens of meetings were held with agencies and stakeholders in development of the plan.

5. Utilization of Partnerships - Q 5.

5. The Project will utilize partnerships to successfully accomplish the Project. The number of partner organizations that will participate in the Project are 2

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

- 4 or more (4 points) 2 to 3 (2 points)
 1 (1 point) None (No points)

List partner organization(s):

US Geological Survey, Western Ecological Research Center - Sacramento and Las Vegas
US Fish and Wildlife Service - Las Vegas
3 BLM field offices (El Centro, Needles, Palm Springs)

6. Impact to Natural and Cultural Resources - Q 6.

6. The Project will avoid and/or minimize impact to natural and cultural resources by 2

(Check all that apply) : Maximum of 7 points (Please select applicable values)

- Maintaining physical barriers to control OHV use (1 point)
 Protecting water quality (1 point)
 Providing bridges instead of wet crossings where appropriate (1 point)
 Protecting special-status species (1 point)
 Re-routing trails to divert away from riparian/wetlands areas (1 point)
 Providing sanitary facilities (1 point)
 Protecting cultural site(s) (1 point)
 Site design precludes the need for the above measures (7 points)

Explain each statement that was checked

Based on findings from monitoring, barriers will be erected or maintained at wilderness access points and at the entry to washes in closed wash zones. The monitoring will increase compliance with the route designaion, thus affording protection to the desert tortoise and other special-status species.

7. Recycled Materials - Q 7.

7. The Project incorporates recycled materials by utilizing 3

(Check all that apply) (Please select applicable values)

- Barrier materials which include recycled content or materials obtained onsite (1 point)
 Signs, sign posts or education kiosks which use products with recycled content (1 point)
 Erosion control features which use materials with recycled content (1 point)
 Paper used for trail maps which includes recycled content (1 point)
 Other products with recycled content (Specify) (1 point)

8. Sustainable Technologies - Q 8.

8. The Project makes substantial use of sustainable technologies such as 0

- Alternative fuel vehicles and equipment
- Renewable energy sources (e.g., solar, wind)

- Low volatile organic compound emission materials (e.g., paint, sealants, carpet)
- Low flow plumbing fixtures
- Water efficient landscaping

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

No (No points)

Yes (4 points)

Explain 'Yes' response

9. Motorized Access - Q 9.

9. The Project improves and/or maintains facilities that provide motorized access to the following non-motorized recreation opportunities 6

(Check all that apply) Scoring: 2 points each, up to a maximum of 6 points (Please select applicable values)

Camping

Birding

Hiking

Equestrian trails

Fishing

Rock Climbing

Other (Specify) [hunting]