

A. Statement of Planning Objectives

The California Desert District has contracted in the past for aerial surveys of raptor nests in high-use OHV areas, especially the Johnson Valley and Stoddard Valley OHV open areas. BLM staff and contractors have followed up with ground-truthing of nest locations and have begun a determination of effects of recreation on golden eagle and prairie falcon nest productivity.

This grant application requests funds to extend that survey work to other recreation areas and to conduct a more intensive study of specific golden eagle nest sites where recreation users are believed to have had an adverse effect on nesting success.

Expanded aerial surveys

The El Paso Mountains are a heavily used area for off-highway vehicle travel. BLM has begun a travel management plan for the area and will designate existing dirt roads as open or closed to vehicle use. Using funds from the OHV Commission, a desert tortoise study is underway, with scheduled completion in 2009. This proposed aerial survey of raptor nests will complement the tortoise study by providing the agency with essential information on the sensitive wildlife resources in the area.

The Calico Mountains are also a heavily used off-highway vehicle recreation area, and this use has increased in the past two years. This range has many nesting birds of prey according to preliminary data gathered by BLM. The potential for conflicts between recreational users and wildlife resources is great. BLM requests funds for an aerial overflight to verify the known nest locations for golden eagle, prairie falcon, turkey vulture, great horned owl and other raptors and to locate any additional nest sites.

Eliminating potential recreation conflicts

Three specific nest sites for golden eagles were monitored in 2008 as part of the OHV Commission-funded study of nesting raptors in the West Mojave. One nest site located on a transmission line in the Stoddard Valley Open Area was abandoned, possibly due to high vehicular traffic. This pair of golden eagles appeared to re-establish at a new, more protected nest site on Stoddard Mountain, though verification is needed. A second nest site on Cougar Buttes in the Johnson Valley Open Area appeared to have been abandoned because of disturbance from OHV users camping nearby. The third golden eagle nest site was in a rock-climbing area near the Sidewinder Mountains, just south of the Stoddard Valley Open Area. Recreational users appeared to have caused abandonment of this site by an incubating eagle, which then may have begun building a new nest in a more protected area one mile away in the Granite Mountains. In all three of these cases, BLM proposes to more closely monitor these birds in the 2010 nesting season and determine their reactions to recreation use.

In partnership with the Wildlife Research Institute, BLM has applied for funding from the California Energy Commission to place satellite transmitters on fifty golden eagles from six regions statewide. The purpose is to identify major flyways, concentration areas for foraging, and causes of mortality. One of the regions where eagles would be captured is the West Mojave Desert. This proposal to the OHV Division would contribute to the larger study by providing funds for placement of satellite transmitters on three golden eagles using the OHV areas. In addition to the goals of the larger CEC study, the tracking of these local desert eagles would provide important information on their movements within the recreation areas of the West Mojave Desert, especially the Stoddard Valley and Johnson Valley Open Areas.

The majority of the work proposed here would be performed by the Wildlife Research Institute (WRI), a non-profit organization based in Ramona, CA under contract to the BLM. WRI would conduct the helicopter surveys and capture golden eagles at the three nest sites and fit them with transmitters. BLM would provide extensive nest monitoring in the Johnson Valley and Stoddard Valley Open areas and record visitor use to the nest sites in these areas. BLM would support WRI by providing vehicles and assistance with eagle capture. The expenses for helicopter time, purchase of transmitters, purchase of satellite data, travel and report preparation are included in the WRI contract budget. All BLM time and vehicle expense is provided as an in-kind match. Two vehicles, one each from the California Desert District and the

Barstow Field Office, would be contributed. Three BLM ecologists, one from the California Desert District, one from the Barstow Field Office, and one from the Ridgecrest Field Office, would participate.

B. Relation of Proposed Project to OHV Recreation

Sustainable recreation should be compatible with sustainable biological resources. The recreational users enjoy seeing birds of prey, particularly golden eagles and prairie falcons, icons of the desert environment. The raptor nesting areas are small parts of the recreation landscape, and protection of nest sites can enhance both the user experience and the viability of the desert ecosystem.

The El Paso Mountains are one of the most popular off-highway vehicle recreation areas in the northern Mojave Desert. Located near the City of Ridgecrest, the 60 square mile area contains many historic features of interest and many special resources and is a favorite area for upland game bird hunting. The West Mojave Plan land use amendment to the California Desert Conservation Area Plan deferred route designation for this region, and the process is now underway. One of the sideboards for habitat protection specified in the West Mojave Plan for the designation process was adequate protection of raptor nests, particularly golden eagles and prairie falcons. The helicopter surveys included in this proposal would fulfill the baseline data requirements necessary to evaluate each route and designate as open or closed. In certain specific cases, a seasonal limitation on vehicular travel could apply.

Similarly for the Calico Mountains, identification of raptor nests via the helicopter survey in this proposal will allow BLM to understand the sustainability and effectiveness of maintaining the designated routes in that area. Compatibility of recreation and protection of raptor nests has not been addressed in this area.

The site-specific golden eagle nest studies will lead to formulation of specific area plans, if necessary, that eliminate the conflicts that might arise between motorized recreation and nesting raptors.

C. Statement of Activities

1. Helicopter surveys of raptor nest sites in two areas: 1) Calico Mountains, 2) El Paso Mountains
2. Nest site monitoring of three golden eagle nest sites in the Johnson Valley and Stoddard Valley Open Areas.
3. Capture of three golden eagles in the West Mojave OHV areas and fitting with satellite transmitters for determination of their local movements. This effort would assist a larger study of golden eagle movements, flyways, use areas and mortality statewide.

D. List of Reports

The reports would be prepared by the non-profit Wildlife Research Institute of Ramona, CA.

1. Map and report of active raptor nest sites in the El Paso Mountains. This will be utilized by the Ridgecrest Field Office of BLM for route designation.
2. Map and report of active raptor nests in the Calico Mountains. This report would be used by the Barstow Field Office of BLM to insure compatibility of recreation use with protection of the birds of prey.
3. Report on compatibility of three nest sites in the Stoddard Valley and Johnson Valley OHV open areas with motorized recreation. This report will include a discussion of the local movements of golden eagles, and of the observed impacts of recreation activities to the eagles during the nesting cycle.

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1. Timeline for Completion

Attachments:

[Survey Timeline](#)

2. Optional Project-Specific Application Documents

Attachments:

[Photo of OHV recreation near raptor nests](#)

[Photo of Nest in Stoddard Valley](#)

3. Optional Project-specific Maps

Attachments:

[OHV Study Areas](#)

Project Cost Estimate for Grants and Cooperative Agreements Program - 2008/2009
 Agency: BLM - California Desert District
 Application: Planning - Raptor Surveys and Nest Monitoring in OHV High-use Areas

6/2/2009

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APPLICANT NAME :	BLM - California Desert District		
PROJECT TITLE :	Planning - Raptor Surveys and Nest Monitoring in OHV High-use Areas	PROJECT NUMBER (Division use only) :	
PROJECT TYPE :	<input type="checkbox"/> Acquisition <input type="checkbox"/> Development <input type="checkbox"/> Education & Safety <input type="checkbox"/> Ground Operations <input type="checkbox"/> Law Enforcement <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Planning <input type="checkbox"/> Restoration		
PROJECT DESCRIPTION :	<p>The California Desert District has contracted in the past for aerial surveys of raptor nests in high-use OHV areas, especially the Johnson Valley and Stoddard Valley OHV open areas. BLM staff and contractors have followed up with ground-truthing of nest locations and have begun a determination of effects of recreation on golden eagle and prairie falcon nest productivity.</p> <p>This grant application requests funds to extend that survey work to other recreation areas and to conduct a more intensive study of specific golden eagle nest sites where recreation users are believed to have had an adverse effect on nesting success.</p> <p>Expanded aerial surveys The El Paso Mountains are a heavily used area for off-highway vehicle travel. BLM has begun a travel management plan for the area and will designate existing dirt roads as open or closed to vehicle use. Using funds from the OHV Commission, a desert tortoise study is underway, with scheduled completion in 2009. This proposed aerial survey of raptor nests will complement the tortoise study by providing the agency with essential information on the sensitive wildlife resources in the area.</p> <p>The Calico Mountains are also a heavily used off-highway vehicle recreation area, and this use has increased in the past two years. This range has many nesting birds of prey according to preliminary data gathered by BLM. The potential for conflicts between recreational users and wildlife resources is great. BLM requests funds for an aerial overflight to verify the known nest locations for golden eagle, prairie falcon, turkey vulture, great horned owl and other raptors and to locate any additional nest sites.</p> <p>Eliminating potential recreation conflicts Three specific nest sites for golden eagles were monitored in 2008 as part of the OHV Commission-funded study of nesting raptors in the West Mojave. One nest site located on a transmission line in the Stoddard Valley Open Area was abandoned, possibly due to high vehicular traffic. This pair of golden eagles appeared to re-establish at a new, more protected nest site on Stoddard Mountain, though verification is needed. A second nest site on Cougar Buttes in the Johnson Valley Open Area appeared to have been abandoned because of disturbance from OHV users camping nearby. The third golden eagle nest site was in a rock-climbing area near the Sidewinder Mountains, just south of the Stoddard Valley Open Area. Recreational users appeared to have caused abandonment of this site by an incubating eagle, which then may have begun building a new nest in a more protected area one mile away in the Granite Mountains. In all three of these cases, BLM proposes to more closely monitor these birds in the 2010 nesting season and determine their reactions to recreation use.</p> <p>In partnership with the Wildlife Research Institute, BLM has applied for funding from the California Energy Commission to place satellite transmitters on fifty golden eagles from six regions statewide. The purpose is to identify major flyways, concentration areas for foraging, and causes of mortality. One of the regions where eagles would be captured is the West Mojave Desert. This proposal to the OHV Division would contribute to the larger study by providing funds for placement of satellite transmitters on three golden eagles using the OHV areas. In addition to the goals of the larger CEC study, the tracking of these local desert eagles would provide important information on their movements within the recreation areas of the West Mojave Desert, especially the Stoddard Valley and Johnson Valley Open Areas.</p> <p>The majority of the work proposed here would be performed by the Wildlife Research Institute (WRI), a non-profit organization based in Ramona, CA under</p>		

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	Line Item	Qty	Rate	UOM	Grant Request	Match	Total
DIRECT EXPENSES							
Program Expenses							
1	Staff						
	Ecologist	240.000	63.790	HRS	0.00	15,310.00	15,310.00
	Ecologist	120.000	56.700	HRS	0.00	6,804.00	6,804.00
	Ecologist	80.000	70.080	HRS	0.00	5,606.00	5,606.00
	GIS Specialist	40.000	41.020	HRS	0.00	1,641.00	1,641.00
	Management and Admin Staff	20.000	51.040	HRS	0.00	1,021.00	1,021.00
	Total for Staff				0.00	30,382.00	30,382.00
2	Contracts						
	Other-raptor surveys	1.000	75000.000	EA	75,000.00	0.00	75,000.00
3	Materials / Supplies						
	Misc Supplies to support Program	1.000	500.000	SET	0.00	500.00	500.00
	Other-VHF transmitters	2.000	500.000	SET	0.00	1,000.00	1,000.00
	Total for Materials / Supplies				0.00	1,500.00	1,500.00
4	Equipment Use Expenses						
	Field Vehicle	10000.00 0	0.500	MI	0.00	5,000.00	5,000.00
	Field Vehicle	2000.000	0.500	MI	0.00	1,000.00	1,000.00

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	Line Item	Qty	Rate	UOM	Grant Request	Match	Total
	Total for Equipment Use Expenses				0.00	6,000.00	6,000.00
5	Equipment Purchases						
6	Others						
7	Administrative Costs						
	Total Program Expenses				75,000.00	37,882.00	112,882.00
	TOTAL DIRECT EXPENSES				75,000.00	37,882.00	112,882.00
	TOTAL EXPENDITURES				75,000.00	37,882.00	112,882.00

Project Cost Summary for Grants and Cooperative Agreements Program - 2008/2009
 Agency: BLM - California Desert District
 Application: Planning - Raptor Surveys and Nest Monitoring in OHV High-use Areas

6/2/2009

	Line Item	Grant Request	Match	Total	Narrative
DIRECT EXPENSES					
Program Expenses					
1	Staff	0.00	30,382.00	30,382.00	
2	Contracts	75,000.00	0.00	75,000.00	
3	Materials / Supplies	0.00	1,500.00	1,500.00	
4	Equipment Use Expenses	0.00	6,000.00	6,000.00	
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		75,000.00	37,882.00	112,882.00	
TOTAL DIRECT EXPENSES		75,000.00	37,882.00	112,882.00	
TOTAL EXPENDITURES		75,000.00	37,882.00	112,882.00	

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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

This proposal will not cause any physical impacts to the environment. The activities are biological research not involving alteration of any existing environmental conditions.

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:

[raptor surveys 2009](#)

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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 Project costs covered by the Applicant is 3

(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. Planning Project - Q 2.

A Planning Project - Page 1

2. The Planning Project would address the following 2

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

- Potential effects of OHV Recreation on special-status species habitats
 Potential effects of OHV Recreation on cultural resources
 Potential effects of OHV Recreation on soil conditions
 Potential effects of OHV Recreation on water quality
 Potential effects of OHV Recreation on other recreation uses
 Potential effects of OHV Recreation on adjacent lands.
 Potential impact to relationships between OHV Recreation and local residents
 Toxic or hazardous materials within a Project Area or adjacent property that may impact OHV Recreation
 Trail issues such as traffic patterns, trails closures, appropriate uses, etc.

B. Planning Project - Page 2

Explain each statement that was checked

The project would illustrate the effects of existing OHV activity on raptor nesting success.

The project would demonstrate the effects of OHV activity on raptor use of adjacent non-recreation lands.

The project would provide essential baseline data for route designation in the El Paso Mountains.

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

- 6 or more items checked (4 points) 4 to 5 items checked (3 points)
 2 to 3 items checked (2 points) 1 or no items checked (No points)

3. Motorized Access - Q 3.

3. The Project would lead to improved facilities that provide motorized access to the following nonmotorized 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)

4. Public Input - Q 4.

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

(Check all that apply) Scoring: 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

During preparation of the West Mojave Plan, many meetings were held in Ridgecrest and other desert cities to discuss the sideboards for designation of routes in the El Paso Mountains. An agreed-upon constraint on open route designation was proximity to active raptor nest sites.

This project was discussed with fifteen environmental groups who attended a meeting in February 2009. The BLM District Biologist explained the objectives of protection of raptor nests in the West Mojave. The monitoring project for golden eagles and prairie falcon nests was discussed, and the groups were asked for their assistance if the grant request was successful.

5. Stakeholder Input - Q 5.

5. If the Project were approved, the planning process would incorporate substantial stakeholder input: 5

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

- No (No points) Yes (5 points)

If 'Yes', explain, specifically, how it would be 'substantial'. Identify stakeholders

The El Paso Collaborative Access Planning Area route designation process has begun in Ridgecrest and is dependent on these baseline studies. BLM will be providing for public input on the route designations in many forums: meetings, written comments, and via the web site and e-mail. The results of this project will be shown to the public for their input on how best to protect raptor nests located along recreation routes.

If the Calico Mountains or Stoddard Valley and Johnson Valley Open Area raptor monitoring necessitates placement of cautionary signs, or seasonal closures, the public would be notified and provided a chance to comment.

6. Utilization of Partnerships - Q 6.

6. 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)

Mojave Desert Bird Club
San Bernardino Valley Audubon Society
Wildlife Research Institute

7. Sustain OHV Opportunity - Q 7.

7. The Planning Project sustains OHV Opportunity in the following manner 9

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

- Project will develop management plans for existing OHV Opportunity (4 points)
- Project will complete environmental review for an OHV Development Project (3 points)
- Project supports development of OHV Opportunities adjacent to population centers (3 points)
- Project supports development of OHV Opportunities in areas that lack legal OHV Opportunity (2 points)
- Project will develop a system of designated OHV routes for an existing OHV Opportunity (2 points)

Explain each statement that was checked

The baseline inventory of raptor nests for the El Paso Mountains route designation process will be completed. This will allow the route designation process to proceed. Site-specific management of OHV routes near known golden eagle and prairie falcon nest sites will be developed in accordance with the sideboards agreed to in the West Mojave Plan for the El Paso Mountains route designation process. The El Paaso Mountains route designation process is currently lacking this essential information.

OHV routes at a golden eagle nest site near Stoddard Valley will be consolidated so that access is simplified and made more efficient. At present, many poorly-maintained routes access the same rock-climbing area.

OHV routes in the Calico Mountains are in need of evaluation. BLM is proceeding with signing of open and closed designated routes, and this inventory will will establish the site-specific parameters for the open designations.

8. Identification of Funding Sources - Q 8.

8. Funds for implementing the completed plan have been identified 5

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

No (No points)

Yes (5 points)

Explain 'Yes' response

BLM has funding available for the El Paso Mountains route designation process under existing appropriated funds. Funds to support the three ecologists and the provision of vehicles from two field offices are available from the existing BLM budget.

Reference Document

West Mojave Plan, page 2-157

9. Offsite Impacts - Q 9.

9. The Planning Project would address offsite impacts relative to the Project Area (e.g., sound, fugitive dust, runoff): 5

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

No (No points)

Yes (5 points)

Explain 'Yes' response

This project would protect biological resources (raptor nest sites) in three areas - specific locations in Johnson Valley and Stoddard Valley, the Calico Mountains, and the El Paso Mountains. The consolidataion of routes that provide the best access while protecting the nest sites will alleviate off-site impacts away from the nests. Identification of protected zones around a nest site with signing will prevent damage to adjacent habitat.