

# West Mojave Route Designation - El Paso Mountains Sub Unit

## I. Regulation, Policy and Land Use Plan Criteria

The foundation for route designation in the EL Paso Mountains was based around the Criteria found in the Code of Federal Regulations 43 CFR 8342.1; BLM Manual Policy 8342 Designation of Areas and Trails (Off-Road Vehicles); the California Desert Conservation Area Management Plan of 1980, as amended; and Area Management Plan Goals & Objectives.

### A. Code of Federal Regulations 43 CFR 8342.1 & BLM Manual Policy 8342 Designation of Areas and Trails (Off-Road Vehicles)

1. Areas and trails shall be located to minimize damage to soil, watershed, vegetation, air, or other resources of the public lands, and to prevent impairment of wilderness suitability.
2. Areas and trails shall be located to minimize harassment of wildlife or significant disruption of wildlife habitats. Special attention will be given to protect endangered or threatened species and their habitats.
3. Areas and trails shall be located to minimize conflicts between off road vehicle use and other existing or proposed recreational uses of the same or neighboring public lands, and to ensure the compatibility of such uses with existing conditions in populated areas, taking into account noise and other factors.

### B. California Desert Conservation Area Management Plan of 1980, as amended

Wildlife Element. Goals: "3. Manage those wildlife species on the Federal and State lists of threatened and endangered species and their habitats so that the continued existence of each is not jeopardized. ... 4. Manage those wildlife species officially designated as sensitive by the BLM for California and their habitats so that the potential for Federal or State listing is minimized. 5. Include consideration of crucial habitats of sensitive species in all decisions so that impacts are avoided, mitigated or compensated."

The Desert Plan directs that most of the El Paso Mountains sub-region be managed as Multiple-Use Class L (limited) with the interior, now within Wilderness, to be managed as Multiple-Use Class C (controlled). Multiple Use Class Guidelines for Class L Motorized Vehicle Access/Transportation - 1982 Amendment

**C. California Desert Conservation Area Criteria for Class L Area Criteria**

“Multiple Use Class L (Limited Use) protects sensitive, natural, scenic, ecological and cultural resource values. Public lands designated as Class L are managed to provide for generally lower-intensity, carefully controlled multiple use of resources, while ensuring that sensitive values are not significantly diminished.”

“Class L: Due to higher levels of resource sensitivity in Class L, vehicle access will be directed toward use of approved routes of travel. Approved routes will include primary access routes intended for regular use and for linking desert attractions for the general public as well as secondary access routes intended to meet specific user needs. ... Routes deemed to conflict with management objectives or to cause unacceptable resource damage will be given priority for closure.... All remaining routes of travel will be monitored for either inclusion as approved routes, or for closure to resolve specific problems.”

Approved routes will include primary access routes intended for regular use and for linking desert attractions for the general public as well as secondary access routes intended to meet specific user needs.

**D. Area Management Plan Goals & Objectives.**

Last Chance Canyon ACEC Management Goals:

To protect the cultural resources of the Last Chance Canyon ACEC for scientific use and for public interpretation.

**II. Natural & Cultural Resources Attributes of the El Paso Mountains Sub Unit :**

- A. Category II and Category III, desert tortoise habitat, a Moderate Tortoise Emphasis Zone with low tortoise densities.
- B. Raptors - within (10% of the routes) the zone of influence of aeries or important roost and nesting areas for raptors.
- C. Mohave ground squirrel habitat.
- D. Sensitive plant habitat (*Phacelia nashiana*, Red Rock Tarweed, *Sclerocactus*....)
- E. Bat roosting sites or potential habitat within mine shafts and adits.

- F. Seeps, springs, riparian areas & wildlife improvements (upland gamebird guzzlers) Approx. 40+ ).
- G. Cultural resources (historic and prehistoric) - Last Chance Canyon ACEC, Black Mountain, Depression Era Mining....

### III. Current Resource Uses & Primary Access Needs Attributes:

#### A. Recreation:

Off Highway Vehicle Touring/Sightseeing.  
Dispersed Camping & Non-Motorized Recreation.  
Upland Gamebird Hunting  
Rock Hounding  
Cultural Heritage Site Access  
Equestrian, Mountain Biking, Hiking, Wilderness Access

#### B. Other Access Needs:

Domestic sheep grazing  
Mineral Exploration  
Utility Corridor Maintenance  
Communication Site Maintenance

### IV. Recreation & Multiple Use Criteria:

#### Ord Mountain Pilot Project Recreation Criteria & Route Attributes

Developed by the Barstow Field Office and five representatives from the American Motorcycle Association and California Association of 4-Wheel Drive Clubs. Following take from Ord Mountain Pilot Project:

##### “Destination

- from place to place
- to a place (e.g. Slash X)

##### Topography - Terrain

- the type of topography the route traverses; this is associated with the type of experience one gets from traversing the route.

##### Length - Time of Opportunity

- length of the route
- length of time the route will take to traverse

##### Scenic - Natural Value

- the type of scenic value one gets from traveling the route

##### Point of Interest

- points of interest to which the route provides access (e.g. special area, historic site)

#### Alignment - Linkage (Access) Opportunity

- route provides access between one area and another
- route provides access between route systems
- route provides only east/west or north/south access within an area for a vehicle type, eliminating the need for long drive-around times
- route provides access to camping area
- route provides access to staging area
- route is a connecting route, a loop route

#### Historic Value

- the route itself has historic value

#### Technical Level of Difficulty

- the route provides an opportunity to experience a route with a certain level of difficulty for a particular type of vehicle

#### Natural Stability - Maintainability

- does route maintain itself, or require maintenance?
- does route wash out frequently?

#### Primitive Nature - Feeling of Exploration

- does route provide an opportunity to “get away from it all and feel as if you are in an unvisited area?”

#### Seasonal Quality - Opportunity

- hunting
- seasonal closure
- “Good” Weather Route
- wildflower displays
- wildlife

#### Technical Levels of Difficulty Opportunities

- system provides opportunities for all levels of difficulty to be experienced in the area

#### Variety of Vehicle Type Opportunities

- route system provides an opportunity for all types of vehicles to have routes appropriate for their use and type of recreation

#### Retains Primitive Nature - Feeling of Exploration

- route system continues to maintain a feeling of being primitive in nature; e.g. the only route in an area is not adjacent to and with a paved road

#### Seasonal Opportunities

- system provides opportunities to use routes within the system at a time when other areas are not heavily used (e.g. the desert areas may be more heavily used in the winter, while the higher elevations on Forest System lands are more heavily used in the summer)”

Taken from the Ord Mountain Pilot Project, Appendix II Recreation Criteria for Route Designation, pgs. 151-156.

## V. The Process

**A. Starting with the Inventory - Aerial Photos** - Digitized by BLM's National Applied Resource Science Center into a GIS format.

### **B. Building the Open Network:**

1. Took virtually every road and trail on the USGS Quad. Maps and Desert Access Guides and designated these routes as open routes of travel.  
Presumption Rationale - these older routes - most of them put in by mining and ranching - form the "backbone" of the primary access network.

2. Apply the Calif. Desert Conservation Area 1982 Plan Amendment Criteria for Class L Areas to the network of "approved" routes: Pg. 12

"Approved routes will include primary access routes intended for regular use and for linking desert attractions for the general public as well as secondary access routes intended to meet specific user needs."

If after Step 1, a destination did not have adequate access - routes were added to accommodate use.

3. Add in routes that enhance the network and recreation experience using the input gathered by the Ord Pilot Project. Concepts such as the following applied to the mapping exercise to enhance the recreation network:

- a. The network should form loops whenever possible.

- b. Routes that have high recreation experience values such as ridgetops, scenic overlooks, interest points (historic, geologic, natural), and are "fun to ride" should be added to the system..

- c. Favor routes that are "multiple use routes", however try to provide a range of skill level experiences.

- d. The network should connect with routes in other management units to provide for long distance touring opportunities.

- e. Include routes used by commercial motorized outfitters (jeep tours and dual sport events).

4. The open route network should provide geographic access, in most cases, to within ½ mile of most points in the management unit (excluding wilderness). Add routes to fill in geographic gaps.
5. Ensure access to all operating mines, range improvements, communications sites, filming sites and other areas utilized by multiple use customers under permits or leases.
6. Provide at least one access point to all private parcels.

**C. Evaluate the Network to Incorporate Resource Protection Attributes:**

1. Apply route setbacks from springs and wildlife water improvements and riparian areas.
2. Examine routes within close proximity to sensitive plant sites.
3. Apply route setbacks from known raptor nesting sites and bat roosting sites.
4. Reduce high angle slope “hill climbs” - erosion and visual resource impacts.
5. Reduce “redundant routes”, usually routes to the same destination points located within 1/4 mile of a designated route offering the same kind of experience opportunity within Class L areas and/or desert tortoise habitat.
6. Reduce route density in tortoise and Mohave ground squirrel habitat.

# West Mojave Plan

## Route Designation - Access & Resource Attributes

### Route Specific Attributes:

- 1A Recreational
- 2A Commercial
- 3A Pipeline
- 4A Powerline
- 5A Misc. Right-Of-Way
- 6A Primary Access - access to a site listed in the BLM's RMIS.
- 7A Secondary Access - access to other non-specific recreation opportunities
- 8A Route Proliferation - new routes that have developed since 1980
- 9A Wildlife Maintenance - access to guzzlers
- 10A Private Property Access
- 11A Impassable/Safety Issue
- 12A Redundant Route - routes located within at least 1/4 of each other that lead to and from the same destination and provide a similar recreation experience.

### Resource Attributes:

- 1R Tortoise - desert tortoise habitat
- 2R Raptors - nesting or activity area
- 3R Bat - known or potential bat roosting habitat - adits and caves
- 4R Breeding Bird - habitat
- 5R Mojave Ground Squirrel - habitat
- 6R Bighorn Sheep - habitat
- 7R Sensitive Plants
- 8R UPA - Unusual Plant Assemblage
- 9R RNA - Research Natural Area
- 10R ACEC - Area of Critical Environmental Concern
- 11R Spring/Guzzler/Well
- 12R Riparian
- 13R Cultural - Site
- 14R Viewshed Viewpoint
- 15R Viewshed Impact
- 16R BLM Campground - Designated site listed in RMIS
- 17R Recreation Destination - Recreation sites managed by the BLM and listed in RMIS
- 18R Camping/Hunting - Access
- 19R National Natural Landmark
- 20R Camping - Dispersed/Primitive Camping Access
- 21R Rock Hounding - Access
- 22R General Dispersed Recreation Access
- 23R 43 CFR 8342 Criteria
  - a) Areas and trails shall be located to minimize damage to soil, watershed, vegetation, air, or other resources of the public lands, and to prevent impairment of wilderness suitability;
  - b) Areas and trails shall be located to minimize harassment of wildlife or significant disruption of wildlife habitats. Special attention will be given to protect endangered or threatened species and their habitats;
  - c) Areas and trails shall be located to minimize conflicts between off-road vehicle use and other existing or proposed recreational uses of the same or neighboring public lands, and to insure the compatibility of such uses with existing conditions in populated areas, taking into account noise and other factors; and
  - d) Areas and trails shall not be located in officially designated wilderness areas or primitive areas. Areas and trails shall be located in natural areas only if the authorized officer determines that off-road vehicle use in such locations will not adversely affect their natural, esthetic, scenic, or other values for which such areas are established.