

The West Mojave Route Network Project

The BLM is hosting a series of public meetings about its latest draft plan for managing off-road vehicle use across 3 million acres of the California Desert known as the “WEMO Plan Area.” **We need your help to make sure BLM does its job to protect Inyo County’s desert resources through a sustainable travel management plan.**

The public meeting for Inyo County will be held:

April 24

5-7 pm

Stratham Hall, 138 N. Jackson St., Lone Pine

The public may comment on the proposed plan through June 14, 2018.

Background:

In 2006, the BLM designated over 5,000 miles of motorized routes in the approximately 3-million-acre West Mojave (WEMO) Plan Area of the California Desert. A federal court overturned that plan in 2009, finding numerous legal violations, including failure to “minimize” the impacts of ORV routes to fragile desert resources and an inadequate environmental analysis. The court ordered BLM to make new route designations that comply with the law. A second attempt by BLM that proposed over 10,000 miles of routes was withdrawn by BLM in 2015.

On March 16, 2018, the BLM released their third attempt of a draft plan that would designate a spaghetti network of 6,313 miles of motorized routes. That is over eight times the length of Interstate 5 from San Diego to the Oregon border. The plan would designate only 179 miles of non-motorized trails for hikers, equestrians, and others who prefer to enjoy the desert through quiet forms of recreation. Though an improvement from 2015, the new plan still designates motorized routes that are either illegal, are not used, or do not exist on the ground. Instead of visiting routes, the BLM used aerial imagery and other computer based techniques to designate routes. Friends of the Inyo will spend time this spring ground-truthing proposed routes in Inyo County and making recommendations to the BLM.



Suggested Talking Points:

- **Balanced Travel Plan:** BLM needs to come up with a plan for the West Mojave that fairly balances motorized recreation opportunities with safe and enjoyable access for hikers and equestrians, especially in areas with opportunities for solitude and quiet recreation

and places with high conservation and cultural values. With only 179 miles of non-motorized trails and over 6,000 miles of motorized routes, this plan does not achieve that balance.

- **Conservation Commitments:** BLM's draft plan fails to align with conservation commitments made in the Desert Renewable Energy Conservation Plan. The WEMO plan should prioritize conservation and quiet recreation in National Conservation Lands, Areas of Critical Environmental Concern, and lands with wilderness characteristics by restoring illegal and user-created motorized routes or converting them to non-motorized trails. It should also protect sensitive species and their habitats such as Mohave Ground Squirrel and Death Valley Sandpaper Plant.
- **Access to Important Information:** BLM must ensure the public has access to necessary information, including geospatial data, accurate maps, and route-specific data used in developing the draft plan and environmental analysis. Much of that information has not been made readily available or is not easily accessible, resulting in public frustration and lack of engagement.
- **Expanding Baseline Route Network:** BLM must recognize that the baseline route network is rapidly expanding- now over 16,000 miles of mostly user-created routes, and must make efforts to halt that expansion.

For More Information About Commenting on the Plan:

Visit BLM's WEMO Route Network Project page at

<https://www.blm.gov/programs/planning-and-nepa/plans-development/california/west-mojave-plan-route-network> and BLM's "e-planning page" (to access relevant documents) at <https://eplanning.blm.gov/epl-front-office/eplanning/planAndProjectSite.do?methodName=dispatchToPatternPage¤tPageId=139660>.

Send your comments by June 14 to: blm_ca_wemo_project@blm.gov

Contact Jora Fogg, Policy Director for Friends of the Inyo, jora@friendsoftheinyo.org.

