

**West Mojave Plan  
Task Group 2  
Green Tree Inn, Victorville  
May 2, 2001**

**Attendees**

**Task Group:** Martin Alois, Doug Amen, Don Archer, Debra Atkins, James Atkins, John Atkinson, Janida Baader, Dawna Barnes, Joe Baucumk, Jerry Clark, Gail Cleve, Lynn Coldwell, Fran Cox, Jerry Cox, Ellen DeJarnette, Roberta Dewey, Dennis Edwards, Jennifer Foster, Kenneth Foster, Gail Fry, Martin Gill, Albert Hall, Suellen Hall, Everette Harvey, June Jaramillo, Donald D. Johnson, Becky Jones, Joan Kahn, Sharon Keen, Paul Kober, Marilya LaFerriere, Carol Landry, Jackie Lindgren, Lynne Low, Tomi Mariano, Jacki Morgan, Melinda McHenry, Cathy McInnis, Robin Nute, Rosemary Olney, Doug Parham, Nancy L. Perry, Dana Raponi, Bob Sackett, Glenn Schmidt, Ray Sims, Deborah Stevens, Mary Teran, Barbara VanZant, Ed Waldheim, Tracy Walters, Barry Welherby, Cliff Whitehead.

**West Mojave Team:** Bill Haigh, Valery Pilmer, Les Weeks (Consultant), Joe Gautsch (Consultant).

**Introductions**

Bill Haigh opened the meeting at 9:30 AM. He noted that there were many representative from equestrian groups present and indicated that he had heard concerns from many equestrian representatives about an action taken at the November 1, 2000 Task Group 1 meeting. At that meeting, Task Group 1 recommended that the term “horseback riding” be stricken from a list of examples of minimum impact recreation. Haigh felt that it would be helpful to clarify this action prior to moving into route designation issues, and explained that equestrian uses are not being impacted by the November 1<sup>st</sup> action.

Ed Waldheim, representing CORVA , indicated that Task Group 1 representatives would like to revisit the November 1 action and change it. He indicated it was not the group’s intent to identify equestrian uses as “consumptive” or high impact. Jeri Ferguson, representing Cal 4-Wheel Drive, indicated that Task Group 1 had wanted another subcommittee established dealing with horses, but had not intended to identify equestrian uses as consumptive. Bob Smith, Field Representative for San Bernardino County 1<sup>st</sup> District Supervisor Bill Postmus, indicated that he spoke with Jeanette Hayhurst regarding her statements in the November 1, 2000 minutes. He indicated that she advised him that her intent had not been to move horseback riding from low to high impact. Carol Landry read a letter from Adda Quinn with EnviroHorse which provided information supporting the position that equestrian use is a low impact use.

Considerable discussion occurred on this issue with the majority of attendees supporting the proposal that Task Group 1 be asked to reverse it’s November 1, 2000 action, and to amend it’s

meeting notes to reflect this.

Haigh indicated that he will bring this issue back to Task Group 1 at their next meeting and will e-mail the letter from Adda Quinn to Task Group 1 members as well.

### **Route Designation Process Update**

Haigh provided an overview of the West Mojave Plan and indicated that route designation will be a component of the Plan. Route designation is being proposed for Bureau of Land Management (BLM) - administered public lands which were either designated Class L by the BLM's California Desert Conservation Area Plan in 1980, or were designated as Critical Habitat for the desert tortoise by the United States Fish and Wildlife Service (FWS) in 1994. These public lands have been subdivided into twenty-one subregions for route designation planning purposes. The intent is to develop a network of roads within each of these subregions that will provide access to places people want to get to, but to do so in a manner that protects wildlife. The network applies to motorized vehicles only - equestrians are not required to remain on designated roads, and are allowed in Wilderness Areas. Haigh indicated that the public is being invited to review the maps and reports developed for each subregion, and provided their comments. Public comments will be reviewed and the road network revised to produce a preferred alternative for incorporation into the West Mojave Plan and EIS. He asked that those present become involved in the process.

Haigh introduced two individuals (Les Weeks and Joe Gautsch) representing the consulting firm, CH2MHill, hired to assist the West Mojave Team in completing the route designation process. Les Weeks, a recreation planner and ecologist, explained that CH2MHill will be working to put together a scientific model that will help strike a balance between recreational access and wildlife and other issues. He will be contacting individuals for input as they work on developing the model.

The following input was provided:

- Jeri Ferguson has an issue with the criteria used. She feels something more definitive is needed. She also feels that the deadlines associated with the proposed expansion of Fort Irwin and the stipulation settling the BLM - Center for Biological Diversity (CBD) lawsuit have resulted in insufficient and unreasonable timeframes for public review of the network. She also feels that the maps are not accurate (i.e., routes shown which do not exist on the ground) which gives her even greater concerns about the timeframes.

Bill Haigh responded that the expansion of Fort Irwin is putting a deadline on this process. He explained that last December's federal legislation regarding the expansion envisioned that the West Mojave Plan and Environmental Impact Statement would provide a comprehensive look at the biological impacts of, and mitigation for, the expansion proposal. Timeframes were established in the legislation. Les Weeks will work with Ferguson on her concerns that the attributes and rationale for route closures need to be

more clear and specific.

- Several individuals expressed concern that recreation uses could suffer as a result of the Fort Irwin expansion and also expressed concern that the timeframes were unrealistic.
- Ed Waldheim stated that the CDB lawsuit and the Fort Irwin expansion are being used as an excuse for the BLM to push route designation through. He suggested designating all routes as open, then deciding how to manage them. He concurred with Jeri Ferguson's remarks that the maps don't match what is on the ground. He also feels that signage of routes is very important as it helps people to stay on the routes.

Bill Haigh indicated that there has been no proposal to expand the proposed tortoise Desert Wildlife Management Areas (DWMA) (tortoise conservation areas) as a result of the Fort Irwin expansion, but that the nature of allowable uses and agency land management that will occur within the DWMA's may be different should the expansion occur. He also indicated that if there are problems with the maps, individuals need to let the West Mojave Team know what those specific problems are. There is some flexibility in the timeframe, just not a year or two. Harold Johnson, Barstow BLM, indicated that the route inventory produced was based on 1994 aerial photographs. A route can go away over time if not used. This was the most recent photography available at the time the BLM staff prepared the inventory. The financial and staffing resources necessary to ground check all the routes in the West Mojave using geographical positioning system (GPS) data did not exist at the time.

Dave Wash, Ridgecrest BLM, indicated that it is difficult to assess how many people are complying with route designation which BLM completed a few years ago in the Rand Mountains. People are riding on closed routes in the Rands, which becomes an enforcement issue for ranger staff. He feels that flexibility in how the various subregions are managed is important as each has different characteristics. In response to a question, he indicated that route proliferation has occurred, principally around camping and staging areas.

- Jeri Ferguson pointed out that within the Ord subregion, staff went out and reviewed each route. This is not happening in the other subregions. She does not feel that sufficient time is being provided for OHV groups to help BLM complete the process.
- Several individuals expressed frustration over the cumulative loss of recreational use on public lands over the years, including those lost as a result of the Desert Protection Act. Many felt that the BLM should have taken a stronger position in the lawsuit with the Center for Biological Diversity.
- It was suggested that rather than designate all 21 subregions, the BLM should focus on problem spots and only propose closures in those areas.

- Concern was expressed that once a route is closed, it would be very hard to reopen.
- Jeri Ferguson would like to see more priority put on producing the maps of the subregions so the public can begin checking them. Haigh indicated that he will look into putting more emphasis on map production and will set a meeting to discuss how the reports will be put together. He emphasized that staff needs specific comments about what works and what doesn't work.
- Concern was expressed that all closed routes are not assigned numbers. This makes it more difficult for people to identify specific routes in their comments. Joe Gautsch will come up with a way to better identify the routes.

### **Next Meeting Date**

The next meeting date for Task Group 2 was set for Wednesday, June 6, 2001 at 9:30 PM at the Green Tree Inn in Victorville.