



Arizona Desert Digest

Bureau of Land Management

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Recreation Challenges in Arizona — From Remote to Urban How BLM is Meeting One Challenge

As more and more people move to the wide-open spaces of the West, the BLM in Arizona faces many challenges to provide quality recreation opportunities to meet the demands from population growth. One of these challenges is the increasing use and enjoyment of off-highway vehicles (OHVs). BLM, in conjunction with the Arizona State Land Department (ASLD) and the Forest Service, have embarked on a statewide route inventory program that will eventually cover all state and public land in Arizona. This partnership is working toward a statewide comprehensive route inventory that can be identified, signed and more effectively managed.

It is estimated that there are more than 70,000 miles of off-highway (“off the pavement”) routes on these lands. It is BLM’s goal to inventory an estimated 30,000 miles of off-highway routes in Arizona by 2010. As of spring 2004, over 14,000 miles of BLM routes have been inventoried. This data will serve as the baseline for current and future land-use planning and subsequent designations.

As these travel networks are identified, the three agencies (BLM, Forest Service and ASLD) will install signs and produce access guide maps for the public. The maps will be coordinated with signs on the OHV routes. The access guides will also provide the user with information about land-use ethics. These are the recommended guidelines the public is encouraged to observe to keep these trails open for OHV use in this domain of vast desert and mountain habitats.

Another challenge is the different rules and regulations governing the use of OHVs on state and federal lands. A cooperative regional group, which is

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BLM PHOTO

Off-highway vehicles can be great fun on Arizona public lands, but please be careful and observe all “rules of the road”.

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From the State Director



The eleven western states, including Arizona, are home to the majority of the Bureau of Land Management's (BLM) public lands. No longer are these areas only in remote settings. Instead, they are not far, and in some cases, in the backyards of many urban dwellers. These lands are being sought by a growing number of people living in

large metropolitan areas, including Phoenix and Tucson, for the area's recreational opportunities. According to recent U.S. Census Bureau data, Arizona is the second fastest-growing state in the nation, and if current trends continue, Arizona's population could increase 52 percent by 2025.

As the population grows, recreation use also increases. One pastime growing significantly on public lands is off-highway vehicle (OHV) use. Since 1977, the use of OHVs has surpassed Arizona's population growth; therefore, OHV use has more than doubled. Indeed, the demands and conflicts are a difficult balancing act – one that BLM and other federal, state, county, and local land managers are trying to manage despite the growing number of users.

This issue of the *Arizona Desert Digest* looks at how BLM is addressing the management challenges of OHV use, since demand for “open space” and recreational opportunities continues to skyrocket. Of course, the challenge is to effectively plan for all appropriate uses, including the use of OHVs on public lands.

If BLM is going to keep up with the public's recreational expectations, we'll need public input as planning efforts move forward. Currently, there are six major efforts underway, and all will be outlining a strategy to provide for recreational opportunities, while protecting the many cultural resources found on BLM public lands, and maintaining the health and natural beauty of these lands we enjoy and appreciate.

— Elaine Zielinski

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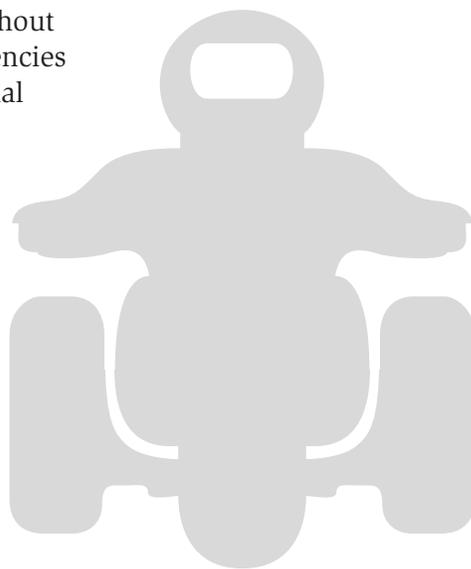
CHALLENGES CONTINUED FROM PAGE ONE

known as the Southwest Strategy OHV Group, is working toward uniform and consistent guidelines for Arizona and New Mexico. The objective is to ensure the motorized enthusiast knows the “rules of the road” with respect to proper registration, equipment and regulations. The Southwest Strategy OHV Group, along with a group of private, state and federal individuals and organizations interested in OHVs, hopes laws and regulations will become uniform and consistent in Arizona and New Mexico and ultimately, throughout the entire Southwest.

BLM Arizona is working on a number of new resource management plans. All six Arizona national forests are beginning to plan for this ever-popular sport of motorized use within the Arizona back country. State land is interspersed with these federally administered public lands. Together, the three agencies will cooperatively designate and interconnect their respective route networks. This will ensure that signs and route numbering will be more

consistent throughout the state. The agencies anticipate that final designations for the most popular-use areas will be completed by the end of this decade.

The BLM route inventory is well underway. OHV planning in resource management plans across much of BLM Arizona has also been initiated. These two separate processes will be used together to help managers determine what types of recreation is occurring in the state, and how best to manage the public land resources as Arizona and the demand for outdoor recreation continues to grow.





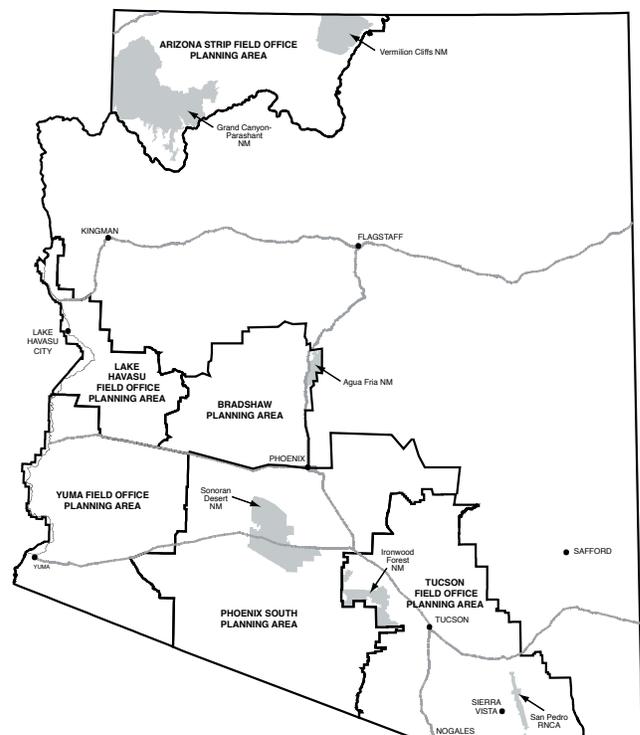
Shorelines with developed areas, like this one along the Colorado River south of Parker Dam, provide many recreational opportunities.

BLM Arizona Land Use Planning Update

The Arizona Strip Field Office planning area includes three Resource Management Plans (RMPs):

- Grand Canyon Parashant National Monument, Vermilion Cliffs National Monument, and the remaining lands within the Arizona Strip Field Office.
- The Lake Havasu Field Office is developing one RMP for all BLM lands within the Lake Havasu Field Office Planning Area.
- The Phoenix Field Office is developing four Resource Management Plans (RMPs): Agua Fria National Monument, Bradshaw-Harquahala; Sonoran Desert National Monument, and Phoenix South.
- The Tucson Field Office has completed one RMP for the Las Cienegas National Conservation Area, and has begun three additional planning efforts: Ironwood Forest National Monument, San Pedro Riparian National Conservation Area, and the remaining Tucson Field Office lands.
- The Yuma Field Office has begun developing one RMP for lands within its boundaries.

For more detailed information regarding each of these planning efforts visit www.az.blm.gov/LUP/planning.htm or contact any BLM office in Arizona.



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User Responsibility and Etiquette

There are many places to find out the Dos and Don'ts of riding off-highway vehicles (OHVs) in Arizona. Call the Arizona Public Lands Information Center at (602) 417-9300 to find out about all land jurisdictions in Arizona. Your local BLM field office can help you find out what opportunities exist in your area. You can also visit the World Wide Web at www.az.blm.gov, www.Int.org, and

www.treadlightly.org to find out about the rules of the road. These sites will help you learn what you should expect to make the experience enjoyable for you, your family, and others enjoying your public lands. Learn the safety tips before you go. Find out what the fire danger is, and if there are any restrictions in place. Hot exhausts from OHVs can spark a fire when parked over dried grass or weeds, for summers in Arizona

are hot and dry. Also, thunderstorms during July and August can cause flash-flooding and dangerous road conditions. Be prepared with the correct equipment, including plenty of water, food and dry clothes. Let someone know where you are going and when you expect to be back. Do not try to cross flooded washes. Wait until the water recedes, and it is safe to cross.