

**Environmental Assessment:  
Special Recreation Permits for  
the Cottonwood Valley Trail  
System :  
DOI-BLM-NV-  
S020-2010-0016-EA:**

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# **Chapter 1. Introduction**



## 1.1. Identifying Information



**Figure 1.1. Late Night Mountain Bike Ride**

Red Rock Canyon National Conservation Area (RRCNCA) is approximately 200,000 acres and is managed for its diverse geological, cultural, biological and recreational resource values. RRCNCA is the focal point of many outdoor recreation activities and events including

sightseeing, picnicking, camping, hiking, bicycling, bird watching, backpacking, rock scrambling, and technical rock climbing.

### **1.1.1. Title, EA number, and type of project**

Special Recreation Permits for the Cottonwood Valley Trail System , DOI-BLM-NV-S020-2010-0016-EA

### **1.1.2. Location of Proposed Action**

Red Rock Canyon National Conservation Area

Mt. Diablo PM

T. 22 S., R. 58 E., sections 11-14, 23-26, 34-36; T. 22 S., R. 59 E., sections 7, 16-21, 28-33; T. 23 S., R. 58 E., sections 1-3, 11-14, 23-26, 35, 36; T. 23 S., R. 59 E., sections 5-8, 17, 18, 20, 28, 29, 33; T. 23 S., R. 58 E., sections 1-3, 11-14, 23-26, 35, 36; T. 24 S., R. 58 E., section 2; T. 24 S., R. 59 E., section 4

### **1.1.3. Name and Location of Preparing Office**

Red Rock/Sloan Field Office

4701 N. Torrey Pines Drive  
Las Vegas, Nevada 89130

### **1.1.4. Identify the subject function code, lease, serial, or case file number**

LLNVS02000

### **1.1.5. Applicant Name**

Not Applicable

## **1.2. Purpose and Need for Action**

The purpose of this Environmental Assessment (EA) is for issuing Special Recreation Permits (SRP) in the Cottonwood Valley Trails System in Red Rock Canyon National Conservation Area (RRCNCA). SRPs are authorizations, which allow for specific recreational uses of public land where a permit is required. They may be issued as a means to control visitor use, protect resources or as a mechanism to accommodate specific recreational use. The need for the proposed action would satisfy public demands for commercial, competitive, and organized events and streamline the SRP process.

BLM's decision to be made is whether or not to approve a designated set of Special Recreation Permits for processing under one EA.

### **1.3. Scoping, Public Involvement and Issues**

Internal scoping was conducted with the resource staff from the Southern Nevada District Office. Since that time we have held a public meeting, involved interested parties in discussions and will continue to include the public in further meetings.

# **Chapter 2. Proposed Action and Alternatives**

## 2.1. Alternative A-Description of the Proposed Action

All approved SRPs will comply with Clark County Air Quality Regulations that is enforced by the Clark County Department of Air Quality and Environmental Management, the air quality compliance oversight agency as designated by the Governor of the State of Nevada. Additional stipulations may be added to individual Special Recreation Permits as required.

The tables below list the types of SRPs that could be issued and the maximum amount of use per SRP that would be analyzed under this EA for the Cottonwood Valley Trail System during the next five years (2011-2016). The numbers are based on historic SRP use (2007–2009) and anticipated increased future SRP use in the Cottonwood Valley Trail System.

**Table 2.1. Commercial Ongoing SRPs**

Type of SRPs	Number of SRPs allowed	Number of tours allowed per day	Maximum participants per tour
OHV guided tours	2	2	2 vehicles
mountain bike guided tours	3	2	12 bicycles
hiking guided tours	3	2	12 hikers
horseback guided tours	1	2	12 horses

**Table 2.2. Competitive SRPs**

Type of SRPs	Number of SRPs allowed per year	Maximum number of participants allowed per event
foot races	6	500
mountain bike races	6	500

**Table 2.3. Organized Event SRP's**

Type of SRPs	Number of permits per year	Number of vehicles per event or number of participants
OHV	3	200
mountain bike	5	500
hikes	5	500
equestrian	3	300

All SRPs would be limited to the north of State Route 160 during the first nine days of upland game bird season in October. This would apply to ongoing, competitive, and organized SRPs. The BLM will coordinate with Forest Service for SRP activities that cross into their agency's

administered lands. Permittees would be required to obtain written permission and provide to the BLM to cross or stage on private land.

### **Commercial Ongoing SRPs**

OHV guided tours: Would be limited to two ongoing SRPs per year. Tours would be limited to two tours per day with no more than two vehicles per tour. Tour vehicles would be limited to designated roads and would be limited to 25 mph.

Mountain bike guided tours: Would be limited to three ongoing SRPs per year. Tours would be limited to two tours per day with no more than twelve mountain bikes per tour, which includes two guides.

Hiking guided tours: Would be limited to three ongoing SRPs per year. Tours would be limited to two tours per day with no more than twelve participants per tour, which includes two guides.

Horseback guided tours: Would be limited to one ongoing SRP per year. Tours would be limited to two tours per day with no more than twelve participants per tour, which include two guides. No onsite storage facilities or corrals would be allowed. Hay or feed for the horses would be required to be weed free.

All tours would be limited to designated roads and trails in the Cottonwood Valley Trail System. No cross country travel would be permitted.

### **Competitive SRPs**

Foot and mountain bike races: Would be limited to six foot and six mountain bike SRPs a year. The races would be limited to 500 participants with no more than 250 participants on the trail at one time.

All event activities will be limited to the designated roads, trails, and parking areas within the Cottonwood Valley Trail System.

### **Organized Event SRPs**

OHV organized events: Would be limited to three SRPs a year with no more than to 200 participants per event. Vehicles would be limited to designated roads and would be limited to 25 mph.

Foot and mountain bike organized events: Would be limited to five foot and five mountain bike SRPs a year with no more than 500 participants per event.

Equestrian organized events: Would be limited to three SRPs a year with no more than 300 participants per event.

All event activities will be limited to the designated roads, trails, and parking areas within the Cottonwood Valley Trail System.

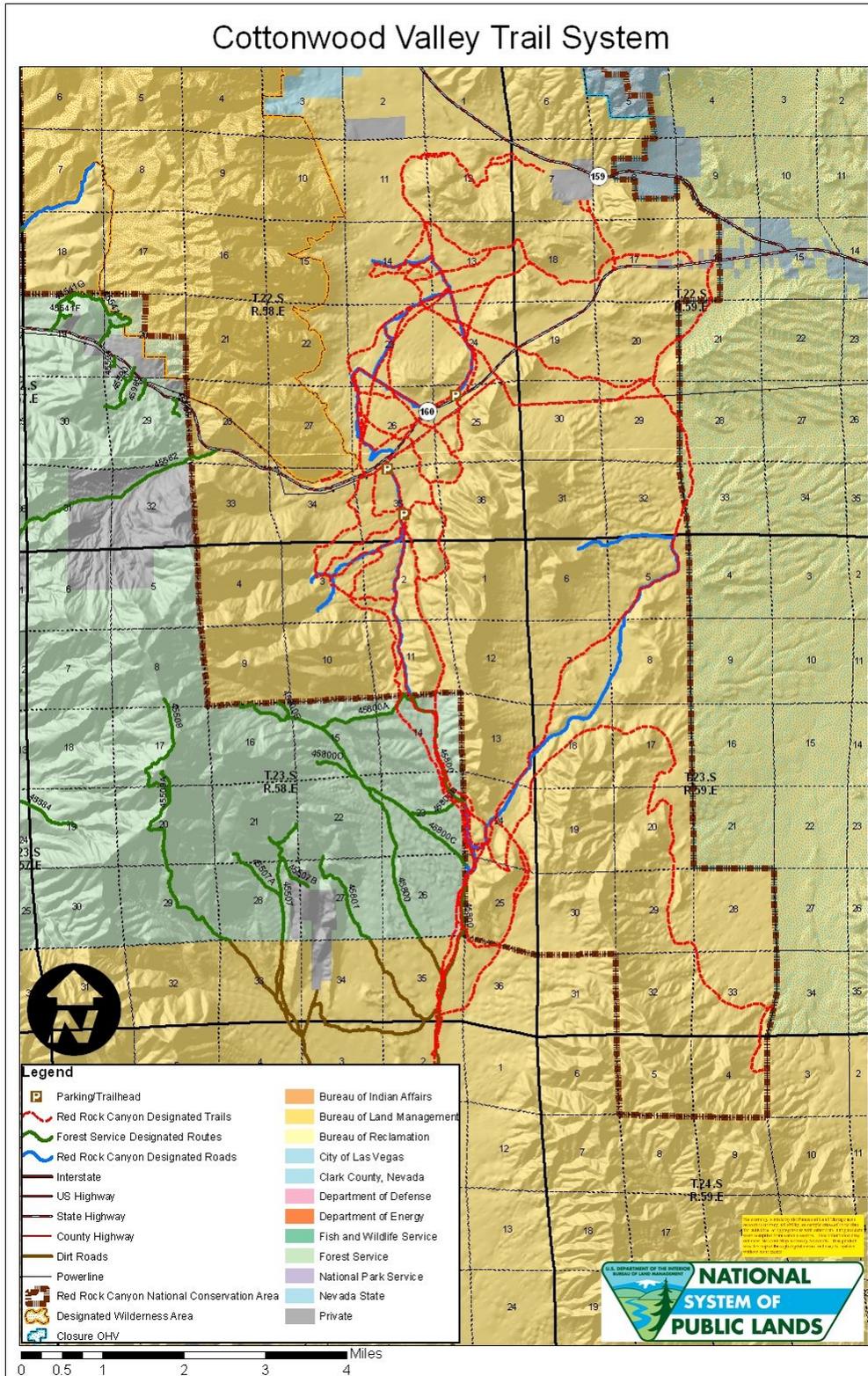
### **Staging and Support for Commercial, Competitive, and Organized Event SRPs**

Staging areas for commercial, competitive, and organized events would be the located at Cottonwood Valley parking lot, Red Valley parking area and the Late Night parking lot. If there is a need for overflow parking, participants will be allowed to park along one side of designated

roads. No parking will be allowed off road or in vegetated areas. Competitive events will have aid stations consisting of tables and chairs, which would be limited to disturbed areas along the trail.

The permittees would provide their own staffing, medical support, parking support, trail markings, portable structures and advertisements. All event-related material would be removed within 48 hours after the event. The painting of rocks or the establishment of permanent markers or improvements would be prohibited.

Permittees would be responsible for providing rest room facilities for all participants/spectators. A minimum of two rest rooms at the main staging areas would be required. If the permittees use existing facilities, they will provide for the maintenance, cleaning and supplies used during the duration of the event, including pumping out of pit toilets after the event.



**Figure 2.1. Cottonwood Valley Trail System Map**

January 10, 2011

Chapter 2 Proposed Action and Alternatives  
Alternative A-Description of the Proposed Action

## **2.2. Description of Alternatives Analyzed in Detail**

### **2.2.1. Alternative B- No Action Alternative**

Under the No-Action alternative, separate environmental assessments would be prepared for each SPR, which would prevent a streamlined process and would cause redundant environmental analysis.

## **2.3. Alternatives Considered but not Analyzed in Detail**

No other alternatives were considered or analyzed in detail.

## **2.4. Conformance**

The Proposed Action-Alternative A is in conformance with the Red Rock Canyon NCA Resource Management Plan, approved May 20, 2005, under the following management directions.

### 5A) Special Recreation Permits

5A.1 Commercial uses have grown steadily in the last five years. In order to avoid establishing use patterns that might be detrimental to RRCNCA, and to give a benchmark for analysis, initial allocations of commercial permits will be established as listed below. As monitoring results are evaluated, the number of permits could increase or decrease in the future. Initial permit allocations will be as follows:

#### 5A.1a) Rock Climbing Guides and Schools

5 year-round permits

"guest" permits (number to be determined in climbing plan)

#### 5A.1b) Guided Horse Ride Operations

3 permits (no trail/use area overlap between permittees)

#### 5A.1c) Bus and Limo Tours (on Scenic Drive, no interpretation or hiking)

No limits on number of tours

#### 5A.1d) 4X4 Vehicle Tour Operations (on designated roads)

4 permits

#### 5A.1e) Guided Bike Tours

4 permits (includes mountain bike and road bike touring)

#### 5A.1f) Guided Interpretive Hikes

5 permits

5A.2 New types of commercial uses proposed will be evaluated to determine if they are appropriate and consistent with RRCNCA management guidelines.

5A.3 The Bureau of Land Management will work in cooperation with local agencies and schools in the Clark County vicinity to further the outdoor experience and educational opportunities offered within the local community. The administration of such agreements will be at the discretion of the National Conservation Area Manager. Agreements determined to fall under this category will not be deducted from the limits set for the previously mentioned categories.

# **Chapter 3. Affected Environment**

A detailed description of the of the affected environment is contained in the Red Rock Canyon National Conservation Area Resource Management Plan.

The table below summarizes the environmental attributes that have been reviewed, whether they may be affected by the Proposed Action, and the rationale for that determination. Elements that would not be affected will not be discussed further in this environmental assessment.

**Table 3.1. Supplemental Authority**

<b>Supplemental Authority</b>	<b>Not Present</b>	<b>Present/ Not Affected</b>	<b>Present/ Affected</b>	<b>Rationale</b>
Air Quality		<b>Affected</b>	X	Carried forward for analysis.
Area of Critical Environmental Concern (ACEC)	X			Resource not present.
BLM Natural Areas	X			Resource not present.
Greenhouse Gas Emissions		X		Currently there are no emission limits for suspected Greenhouse Gas (GHG) emissions, and no technically defensible methodology for predicting potential climate changes from GHG emissions. However, there are, and will continue to be, several efforts to address GHG emissions from federal activities, including BLM authorized uses.
Cultural/ Historical		X		All permitted activities are restricted to existing/established trails and these activities will avoid all archaeological sites (including rock art and roasting pit sites) near the Cottonwood Valley Trail System.
Environmental Justice	X			Not present.
Farmlands Prime or Unique	X			In this area there are no prime or unique farmland designations.
Noxious Weeds/Invasive Non-native Species		X		The mitigation measures present in the document, including travel restricted to existing trails and equipment inspections prior to events, are sufficient to address the risks posed by these activities.

Native American Religious Concerns		X		There are no Native American issues that were identified during the development of the GMP, and so long as sensitive cultural resources are avoided, particularly archaeological sites, there are no known tribal issues with the development of the trails system.
Floodplains		X		All events will occur on designated roads and trails. Trails are not located within FEMA designated floodplains. No impacts to downstream flooding effects.
Riparian/Wetlands		X		All events will occur on designated roads and trails and would not occur in riparian areas.
Threatened and Endangered Wildlife Species		X		The proposed action has a no-effect determination on the threatened desert tortoise ( <i>Gopherus agassizii</i> ). This project will have no effect on any other federally listed species or designated critical habitat.
Threatened and Endangered Plant Species	X			Threatened and endangered plant species are not present.
Fish and Wildlife Excluding Federally Listed Species		X		Wildlife species in the general area include small mammals, rodents, birds and reptiles. Two BLM sensitive species banded Gila monster and chuckwalla, may be present in the general area.
Vegetation Excluding Federally Listed Species		X		BLM special status plants may be present along and adjacent to the trails. Because the proposed activities would remain on existing roads, trails and previously disturbed areas, potential impacts to BLM special status plants would be negligible and consistent with impacts to rare plants analyses the in Red Rock RMP
Migratory Birds		X		As there will be no new surface disturbance associated with the proposed action, there will be no impact on migratory birds.
Waste-Hazardous/Solid	X			Not Present.

Water Quality		X		All events will occur on designated roads and trails.
Wild and Scenic Rivers	X			Resource not present.
Wilderness/WSA		X		The proposed action is not located within or adjacent to WSAs. The proposed action is located in close proximity to Rainbow Mountain Wilderness and not within the Wilderness itself. No buffers are created around wilderness although activities will occur on designated trails outside of the Wilderness.
Areas with Wilderness Characteristics	X			The proposed action is not located within areas inventoried for elements of wilderness characteristics.
Forests and Rangelands		X		Cactus and yucca may be present along and adjacent to trails. Because the proposed activity will be confined to existing roads, trails and previously disturbed areas, the proposed activities would be negligible and would not require mitigation.
Human Health and Safety			X	There is potential for participants to be injured during competitive events.
Visual Resource Management		X		The proposed action occurs within VRM classes II, III, and IV.
Wild Horses and Burros			X	The proposed action area is part of the Red Rock Herd Management Area. There are potential impacts to the wild horses and burros located in the Red Rock HMA.
Soils		X		All events will occur on designated roads and trails.
Livestock Grazing	X			There are not any authorized grazing allotments in this area.
Recreation			X	Carried forward for analysis.

### 3.1. Air Quality

The Red Rock Canyon National Conservation Area (RRCNCA) is located within Clark County and most of the RRCNCA is located within Hydrographic Basin 212 (designated air shed). Clark County has been designated by the US EPA as “serious” nonattainment area for PM10,

(particulate matter having an aerodynamic diameter of 10 microns or less), Ozone (O<sub>3</sub>) and Carbon Monoxide (CO).

Air Quality within the RRCNCA tends to be slightly better than the valley to the east; however, visibility and air quality are impacted by the proximity to the Las Vegas metropolitan area. Primary emissions within the RRCNCA are derived from mobile sources such as cars, light trucks and motorcycles that utilize the Scenic Drive and other designated recreation areas and also from periodic wildfires.

The Clark County Department of Air Quality and Environmental Management (DAQEM) has been delegated the authority, under the provisions of the Nevada Revised Statute 445B.500 and by direction of the Clark County Board of County Commissioners via the US EPA, to implement and enforce an air pollution control program in Clark County, Nevada. DAQEM applies and enforces the Air Quality Regulations, which establish requirements for sources who emit or release air contaminants into the atmosphere.

### **3.2. Threatened and Endangered Wildlife Species**

Threatened and endangered species are placed on a federal list by the U. S. Fish and Wildlife Service (USFWS) and receive protection under the Endangered Species Act of 1973, as amended. The only T & E species known to occur in the vicinity of the project area is the threatened desert tortoise (*Gopherus agassizii*).

The habitat requirements needed for a desert tortoise to survive include sufficient suitable plants for forage and cover, suitable substrates for burrow and nest sites, and freedom from disturbance. In the Mojave region, the desert tortoise occurs primarily on flats and bajadas with soils ranging from sand to sandy-gravel characterized by scattered shrubs and abundant inter-shrub space for herbaceous plant growth. They are also found on rocky terrain and slopes. The desert tortoise comes out of hibernation sometime during the month of March and returns to hibernation in November depending on temperature. Past monitoring data in southern Nevada shows that tortoise activity peaks in April, May, September and October.

Historical survey data indicates that the area surrounding the project site is moderate to very low density tortoise habitat.

### **3.3. Fish and Wildlife Excluding Federally Listed Species**

Wildlife The RRCNCA supports a rich community of nearly 300 diverse wildlife species. The project area supports wildlife characteristic of the northeastern Mojave Desert. Biological diversity varies according to topography, plant community, proximity to water, soil type, and season. Many of these species have adapted complex life strategies for survival in the desert environment. Wildlife species in the general area include small mammals, rodents, birds and reptiles. Based on ecological sensitivity factors, groups of priority management concern are bats, raptors, reptiles and amphibians. The remaining RRCNCA wildlife group, carnivores and hoofed animals, represent a mix of unrelated species. Carnivores include foxes, coyotes, ringtails, badgers, bobcats and mountain lions.

Several common species of reptiles would be represented in the surrounding habitat types. These species include the western whiptail (*Aspidoclelis tigris*), desert iguana (*Dipsosaurus dorsalis*), side-blotched lizard (*Uta stansburniana*), zebra-tailed lizard (*Callisaurus draconoides*), desert

tortoise (*Gopherus agassizii*), western shovel-nosed snake (*Chionactis occipitalis*) and garter snake (*Thamnophis* sp.).

Common bird species that would be represented include the rock wren (*Salpinctes obsoletus*), black-throated sparrow (*Amphispiza bilineata*), turkey vulture (*Cathartes aura*), common raven (*Corvus corax*), phainopepla (*Phainopepla nitens*), red-tailed hawk (*Buteo jamaicensis*), and western burrowing owl (*Athene cunicularia hypugaea*).

Common mammal species include the black-tailed hare (*Lepus californicus*), and the desert cottontail (*Sylvilagus audubonii*). Abundant evidence during the course site visit suggested the presence of common Mojave Desert rodent inhabitants such as cactus mice (*Peromyscus eremicus*), Merriam's kangaroo rats (*Dipodomys merriami*) and species associated with rocky habitats including the desert wood rat (*Neotoma lepida*). All of these species maintain dens and nest, hunt and forage, and rely on close ecological relationships to the habitat in which they live.

According to the definition of a BLM sensitive species the following sensitive species are known to potentially occur within the area adjacent to the project site: western burrowing owl, western chuckwalla and banded Gila monster.

#### Western burrowing owl (*Athene cuniculari hypugaea*)

The Western burrowing owl is a diurnal bird of prey specialized for grassland and shrub-steppe habitats in western North America. The owls are widely distributed throughout the Americas and can be found from central Alberta, Canada to Tierra del Fuego in South America. Burrowing owl habitat typically consists of open, dry, treeless areas on plains, prairies, and desert floors. Burrowing owls most frequently use mammal burrows created by other animals such as prairie dogs (*Cynomys* spp.), ground squirrels (*Spermophilus* spp.), coyotes (*Canis latrans*) or desert tortoises (*Gopherus agassizii*). The burrows are used for nesting, roosting, cover, and caching prey. In recent decades, the range and species count have been declining primarily due to agricultural, industrial and urban development that reduce burrow availability.

#### Western chuckwalla (*Sauromalus aker*)

The western chuckwalla is a Nevada state protected species that is found throughout the deserts of the southwestern United States and northern Mexico. Chuckwallas inhabit rocky outcrops where cover is available between boulders or in rock crevices, typically on slopes and open flats below 5,000 feet. Typical habitat includes rocky hillsides and talus slopes, boulder piles, lava beds, or other clusters of rock, usually in association Mojave Desert Shrub vegetation. This species requires shady, well-drained soils for nests. The chuckwalla is a widespread species, but is regionally limited by its requirement for rock outcrops. Chuckwallas likely occur within the project area, but would be localized on rock out-croppings.

#### Banded Gila monster (*Heloderma suspectum*)

The Gila monster is a large, heavy-bodied lizard with a massive head, a short thick tail, and short limbs with strong claws. It has flamboyant dorsal coloration of black and pink, orange, or yellow and occasionally exceeds 50 centimeters (19.7 inches) in total length. The Gila monster's range includes extreme southwestern Utah, southern Nevada and adjacent southeastern California south through southern Arizona, southwestern New Mexico, and much of Sonora to Sinaloa, Mexico. Its habitat includes Mojave and Sonoran desert scrub, desert grassland, thorn scrub, and

occasionally pine-oak woodland. Threats to this reptile include illegal collection, traffic fatalities, and most severely is habitat destruction from urban and agricultural development.

### **3.4. Wild Horse and Burro**

The proposed permit area in Cottonwood Valley encompasses a portion of the Red Rock Herd Management Area (HMA). The Red Rock HMA encompasses approximately 160,000 acres of BLM public land and approximately 27,000 acres of USFS public land in southern Clark county. The wild horses and burros generally rely on some portion of either the BLM or USFS public lands to provide their required habitat throughout the year. The wild horses and burros rely on several key water sources on each side of Highway 160. The 2010 wild horse and burro population estimate (adults only) for the Red Rock HMA is 35 wild horses and 54 wild burros.

### **3.5. Human Health and Safety**

There is potential for injuries, both minor and severe, to occur with participants during the permitted events especially competitive events.

### **3.6. Recreation**

The Cottonwood Valley Trails System is approximately 60 miles of trails that are designated for hiking, mountain biking and equestrian use. The trail system is located in the southern portion of RRCNCA and runs north and south of State Route 160(SR160). There are three designated trail heads and two main designated roads located within the trail system.

There are approximately 10 miles of designated road available for OHV use in the Cottonwood Valley/Late Night area.

# **Chapter 4. Environmental Effects**

## 4.1. Alternative A- Proposed Action

### 4.1.1. Air Quality

In September 2004, a comprehensive, cumulative Las Vegas Valley Air Modeling Assessment and supporting field measurements were conducted by Argonne National Laboratory for BLM. This study was conducted to assess current and future cumulative air quality impacts in the Las Vegas metropolitan valley, which includes the RRCNCA.

The principal objective of the study was to determine whether BLM's plan to accelerate the rate of federal land disposition could be accomplished with the resource management objectives spelled out in BLM's Resource Management Plan (RMP). The specific air resource management objectives identified in the plan is consistent with Clark County's mandate for attaining and maintaining all federal and state ambient air quality standards.

The Clean Air Act requires the US EPA to set National Ambient Air Quality Standards (NAAQS) for six common air pollutants. These air pollutants, known as "criteria pollutants" are commonly found throughout the United States. They are particle pollution (often referred to as particulate matter), the formation of ground-level ozone, carbon monoxide, sulfur oxides, nitrogen oxides, and lead.

These pollutants can be harmful to human health and the environment, and cause property damage. Of the six pollutants, particle pollution and ground-level ozone are the most widespread health threats. EPA identifies these pollutants as "criteria" air pollutants because it regulates them by developing human health-based and environmentally-based criteria (science-based guidelines) for setting permissible levels. Health-based criteria pollutants are called primary standards and environmentally-based criteria pollutants are known as secondary standards.

Simulations using the Argonne National Laboratory air quality model indicated potential for future ozone concentrations from development of disposed lands to temporarily exceed the standard for select areas of the Las Vegas Valley. The temporary exceedances were considered a "worst case" scenario because the model was constructed using very conservative approaches and only included reformulated fuels as a VOC reduction strategy.

The Argonne National Laboratory air quality model used conservative assumptions and the results projected in the study indicated the ozone model adequately addressed future expected levels of ozone in the Las Vegas Valley. The assumptions were based on a land disposal rate of approximately 4,000 acres per year.

Due to the current economic downturn and the greatly reduced rate of land disposal, the current .075 ppb ozone standard probably will not be exceeded, but as with all models, some uncertainty exists. In order to address uncertainty, the BLM will coordinate with the DAQEM to ensure federal actions are consistent with the future guidelines provided by the DAQEM.

In March 2008, the US EPA changed the standard for ozone from .084 ppb to .075 ppb. This updated standard will require implementation of Volatile Organic Compound (VOC) reduction strategies. There are a number of VOC reduction strategies, including but not limited to reformulated fuel, vapor recovery, double walled underground storage tanks, increased mass transit and car pooling. It is not known which of these reduction strategies would be implemented by the DAQEM as part of the State Implementation Plan (SIP) to show attainment for the new

ozone standard. BLM will work closely with Clark County to ensure BLM authorizations are included as part of the SIP for the affected area.

Furthermore, BLM, in coordination with the DAQEM, also will determine if additional modeling is needed in the future if disposal rates increase to initially assumed values and specific VOC reduction measures are identified and implemented under a revised SIP.

The standard for carbon monoxide has not been exceeded in more than ten (10) years in Clark County and the County has applied to the US EPA for a re-designation as a “maintenance” status. Routine construction practice includes the use of water as a temporary dust suppressant to reduce the potential for the release of particulate matter into the air.

This has limited effectiveness, however, during high-wind events which may inject dust into the air. In addition to the use of water to mitigate dust emissions from these occurrences, best management practices (BMPs) as set forth in the Section 94 Handbook developed by DAQEM.

## **4.2. Threatened and Endangered Wildlife Species**

Contiguous habitat is adjacent to the Proposed Action wherein potential corridors for tortoise entry exists. Since tortoise sign has been found in the vicinity and undisturbed habitat exists in the area, there is potential for tortoises to wander into the Proposed Action area. Since there will be no new surface disturbance associated with this proposed action, there is no affect on the desert tortoise.

## **4.3. Fish and Wildlife Excluding Federally Listed Species**

Wildlife species in the general area include small mammals, rodents, birds and reptiles. These species would be displaced if lands are disturbed within the project area. Additional impacts associated with the mortality from vehicular traffic may also be realized with subsequent use of the project area.

*Western burrowing owl (Athene cuniculari hypugaea)*

Potential western burrowing owl habitat occurs adjacent to the project area. Direct loss of individuals is not anticipated as the proposed action will create no new surface disturbance.

*Banded Gila monster (Heloderma suspectum) and western chuckwalla (Sauromalus obesus)*

Banded Gila monster and western chuckwalla may be killed or injured if they wander into the area of activity.

## **4.4. Wild Horses and Burros**

The proposed action would not directly have an effect on wild horses and burros because they would avoid the OHV tour course due to vehicle noise and the presence of humans. Wild horses and burros would not be restricted from forage or water due to the multiple locations of those resources throughout the Red Rock HMA. There would be no loss of forage along the proposed tour courses and no impacts to the available forage within the HMA because participants will remain on the existing trails, roads and parking areas.

If in the vicinity of the tour course, wild horses and burros would be temporarily displaced from that area upon arrival of the first vehicle. Wild horses and burros would likely move a reasonable distance away from the tour course. Upon passage of the last tour vehicle, wild horses and burros would return to their normal ranges within the HMA. A collision between a vehicle and wild horse and/or burro is possible, but very unlikely. There have not been any collisions between wild horses and/or burros during any previous events.

## **4.5. Human Health and Safety**

There is no way to predict who or how many participants would be injured during competitive events; however, the permittees will be required to put measures into place to try to reduce the potential for fatality during events by having a medical plan and emergency medical personnel with certification of Advanced First Aid (AFA) to Emergency Medical Technician (EMT) on site. Permittees will also be required to have a communication system available to contact advanced care. Participants will be required to be advised of the presence of harmful animals, desert conditions, signs and symptoms of heat related problems, and what to do in case of emergency.

## **4.6. Recreation**

The majority of the event SRPs would occur during the high use periods (spring and fall). Although the area is not closed to casual recreational users during permitted events, it may affect the users' experience. Parking can be limited at the trail heads and the opportunity for solitude on the trail decreases during permitted events. Trail widening could occur from illegal passing during competitive foot and mountain bike events. Trail widening can increase erosion which could cause maintenance issues and affect the recreational user's experience of the trail.

The proposed action could generate additional interest in the Cottonwood Valley Trail System by exposing participants to the area for the first time. The additional recreation use could also contribute to trail widening or additional unauthorized trails being created. It could also increase the potential for conflicts between the recreational users.

## **4.7. Alternative B. - No Action**

### **4.7.1. Air Quality**

Under the No-Action alternative, separate environmental assessments would be prepared for each SRP, which would prevent a streamlined process and would cause redundant environmental analysis.

### **4.7.2. Threatened and Endangered Wildlife Species**

With a no action alternative the contiguous habitat is wherein potential corridors for tortoise entry exists. Since tortoise sign has been found in the vicinity and undisturbed habitat exists in the area, there is potential for tortoises to wander into the area and disturbed by other users.

### **4.7.3. Fish and Wildlife Excluding Federally Listed Species**

The potential for species disturbance still exists if users wander off trail and roads. Wildlife species in the general area include small mammals, rodents, birds and reptiles. These species would be displaced if lands are disturbed.

### **4.7.4. Wild Horses and Burros**

A no action alternative would have an effect on wild horses and burros because the animals would be able to move freely due to fewer OHV tours and would be less subject due to vehicle noise and the presence of humans. Wild horses and burros would not be restricted from forage or water due to the multiple locations of those resources throughout the Red Rock HMA. There would be no loss of forage along the proposed tour courses and no impacts to the available forage within the HMA. Visitors would be less educated about the wild horse and burro herds and human impacts on them.

### **4.7.5. Human Health and Safety**

Users to the area will be less educated about of the presence of harmful animals, desert conditions, signs and symptoms of heat related problems, and what to do in case of emergency. There could be less conflicts with groups, however, there could be an increase of law enforcement issues as it is known as an area which is less visited by official representatives.

### **4.7.6. Recreation**

The majority of casual use occurs during the spring and fall. The no action alternative would result in fewer disturbances to the users experience. Parking may be less of an issue at the trail heads and the opportunity for solitude on the trail may increase. Trail widening could still occur from illegal passing during hiking and mountain bike use, however trail widening could be reduced and decrease erosion which could decrease maintenance issues. Less official visitation of the area could result in increased damage and vandalism of facilities. This negative experience would affect the recreational user's experience of the trail.

The no action could reduce knowledge of the Cottonwood Valley Trail System . It could also cause a loss of community support if local organization felt under served.

## **4.8. Cumulative Effects**

### **Alternative A- Proposed Action**

#### **4.8.1. Air Quality**

Cumulative effects are defined in the BLM NEPA Handbook (2008) as impacts on the environment that result from the incremental impact of the action when added to other past, present, and reasonably foreseeable future actions regardless of what agency (Federal or non-Federal) or person undertakes such other actions. Cumulative effects can result from individually minor, but collectively significant, actions taking place over a period of time. No

significant cumulative effects have been identified in this document. The proposed area for future projects is located within RRCNCA, which includes approximately 199,818 acres of public land managed by the BLM Southern Nevada District Office that are largely undeveloped.

RRCNCA offers two distinct areas within its boundaries: the northern portion, which is mostly undeveloped and primitive, including designated wilderness areas, and the southern portion, which boasts a 13-Mile Scenic Drive, a recently completed Visitor Center with extensive outdoor exhibit/interpretive materials, more than 100 miles of trails, and picnic and camping sites. Future developments include upgrades to the existing campground aimed at improving visitor services and experience. These upgrades include paving the gravel access roads, campsite parking stalls and parking lots; routing water and electrical utilities to the site; installing concrete pads for picnic tables; installing shade structures; adding one double vault toilet and a recreational vehicle dumping station.

Two additional trail systems are in the planning process. These future projects include a trail system in the northern portion of Red Rock where no trails currently exist and a 26.8 mile multi-use (non-motorized) trail in the southern portion. BLM is coordinating with the City of Las Vegas and Clark County to ensure any trail development will connect Red Rock to the urban environment of Las Vegas and will be compatible with Clark County's regional trails plan.

#### **4.8.2. Threatened and Endangered Wildlife Species**

Off-road tours may increase the total use and human presence in the Red Rock Canyon; this increase has the potential to directly and indirectly impact the desert tortoise. These impacts should be limited under our current management, however, and there should be little cumulative impacts as a result of activities which stay on designated trails.

#### **4.8.3. Fish and Wildlife Excluding Federally Listed Species**

Off-road tours may increase the total use and human presence in the Red Rock Canyon; this increase has the potential to directly and indirectly impact the desert tortoise. These impacts should be limited under our current management, however, and there should be little cumulative impacts as a result of activities which stay on designated trails.

#### **4.8.4. Wild Horses and Burros**

Off-road tours may increase the total use and human presence in the Red Rock HMA; this increase has the potential to directly and indirectly impact the wild horse and burros by altering their normal foraging and watering behaviors. These impacts should be limited under our current management, however, and there should be little cumulative impacts to the wild horses and burros as a result of the associated activities. The proposed tours affect a small portion of the overall HMA and total habitat that is available in the Red Rock HMA is large.

#### **4.8.5. Human Health and Safety**

Having first aid requirements and communication will allow the public access to emergency aid with this proposal. Having staff and participants educated about the presence of harmful animals, desert conditions, signs and symptoms of heat related problems, and what to do in case

of emergency will reduce incidences of first aid calls. Permittees presence in the area should also reduce other law enforcement and safety issues.

#### **4.8.6. Recreation**

Over the last four years we have had an total of ten mountain bike races, five foot races, four equestrian events, two rock climbing, and no 4X4 events. We have had two full time mountain biking and two 4X4 permits. Events have hosted an average of 50 participants for all types. Full time mountain bike permits have averaged 1777 riders per year. Full time 4X4 permits have averaged 30 persons per quarter.

We anticipate a slight increase of use by these events in the next five years as information about the permitting process spreads and groups which may not have applied for permits are informed of our permitting process. These groups will be better informed about the natural and cultural resources through the permitting process and be able to pass this information on to their participants.

With the current economic climate, we have seen a decrease in participants per group, therefore overall numbers of permits may stay relatively steady.

Future planned projects include a multi-use trail system to be constructed between the scenic drive entrance and exit paralleling Highway 159. This trail may provide an alternative area to host events resulting in fewer events in the area. As part of this design, the redesign of the scenic drive exit would accommodate equestrian use. Equestrian and mountain bikers may find this new area more attractive for events.

Other future actions foreseen include designation of trails in the Blue Diamond Mesa/Cowboy trails area for possible use by hiking, mountain biking and equestrian use. This would increase uses of a little known area of the NCA. It would allow other areas to receive less intensive use and recreational opportunities sought out by current recreationists. Increased use of this area would require additional maintenance and signing.

#### **Alternative B. - No Action**

##### **4.8.6.2. Air Quality**

RRCNCA offers two distinct areas within its boundaries: the northern portion, which is mostly undeveloped and primitive, including designated wilderness areas, and the southern portion, which boasts a 13-Mile Scenic Drive, a recently completed Visitor Center with extensive outdoor exhibit/interpretive materials, more than 100 miles of trails, and picnic and camping sites. Future developments include upgrades to the existing campground aimed at improving visitor services and experience. These upgrades include paving the gravel access roads, campsite parking stalls and parking lots; routing water and electrical utilities to the site; installing concrete pads for picnic tables; installing shade structures; adding one double vault toilet and a recreational vehicle dumping station.

Two additional trail systems are in the planning process. These future projects include a trail system in the northern portion of Red Rock where no trails currently exist and a 26.8 mile multi-use (non-motorized) trail in the southern portion. BLM is coordinating with the City of Las Vegas and Clark County to ensure any trail development will connect Red Rock to the urban environment of Las Vegas and will be compatible with Clark County's regional trails plan.

#### **4.8.6.3. Threatened and Endangered Wildlife Species**

No action impacts should be limited under our current management and there should be little cumulative impacts as a result of activities which stay on designated trails

#### **4.8.6.4. Fish and Wildlife Excluding Federally Listed Species**

No action impacts should be limited under our current management and there should be little cumulative impacts as a result of activities which stay on designated trails.

#### **4.8.6.5. Wild Horses and Burros**

Off-road tours may decrease in the no action alternative. The total use and human presence in the Red Rock HMA may be reduced. This decrease has the potential to reduce impact to the wild horse and burros by allowing their normal foraging and watering behaviors. There should be little cumulative impacts to the wild horses and burros as a result. The no affect alternative includes a small portion of the overall HMA and total habitat that is available in the Red Rock HMA is large.

#### **4.8.6.6. Human Health and Safety**

Less injuries may occur with a decrease in competitive events although there maybe and increase due to less informed users in the area. Law Enforcement issues may also increase with the lowering of an “official presence” in the area.

#### **4.8.6.7. Recreation**

With the no action alternative, EAs will be done individually and processed slower. As a result fewer permits will be approved. This will reduce the amount of events over time.

We would anticipate a large decrease of permit applications the next five years as information about the permitting process spreads and groups become aware of the long wait.. We could also see an increase in unpermitted activities as the local communities become frustrated. These groups will be less informed about the natural and cultural resources and be able to pass this information on to their participants.

The decrease in permits could result in more damage to facilities and trails, with less “official presence” to monitor use and report it to appropriate authorities. It could also reduce maintenance if fewer users utilize the facilities and trails. It may also create a shift in pressure to other areas in the NCA for permits.

### **4.9. Mitigation Measures**

The following mitigation measures will also be included in the stipulations that will be attached to the permit:

### **4.9.1. Air Quality**

1. An approved Dust Control Permit must be obtained through the DAQEM before soil is disturbed. Section 94 of the Clark County Air Quality Dust Control Regulations require a dust control permit for projects with the following dimensions: Soil-disturbing or construction projects greater than or equal to 0.25 acres in the aggregate; trenching projects of 100' or greater in length; demolition of structures 1,000 square feet or larger; a dust control permit and a site-specific dust mitigation plan is required for construction activities on sites of ten acres or more. The Permittee will ensure the implementation of best management practices (BMP) is provided for all proposed actions within the RRCNCA and all stipulations as set forth in dust control permits are in compliance for the duration of the proposed actions.

### **4.9.2. Threatened and Endangered Wildlife Species**

1. A speed limit of 25 miles per hour shall be required for all vehicles traveling on the existing access roads.
2. Should a desert tortoise enter the area of activity, all activity shall cease until such time as the animal has left the area of its own accord.
3. Participants will be instructed to check underneath all vehicles before moving them as tortoises often take cover underneath parked vehicles.
4. Participants will be provided educational information on the desert tortoise which includes legal protection and consequences for the violation of the Endangered Species Act. If a tortoise is observed, officials will ensure that participants do not harass the desert tortoise, or if a tortoise should wander into harm's way the event will cease until the animal moves away on its own volition.
5. All related trash will be contained and removed from the site at the conclusion of the event(s).
6. Participants will be instructed to stay on existing trails and roads. No new trails will be constructed.
7. No off-trail driving, hiking, biking or equestrian use is allowed by those covered by these permits.

### **4.9.3. Wild Horse and Burro**

1. Participants will not exceed 25 mph speeds throughout the HMA, especially from March to June, as this is the primary foaling season. Alternate tour routes could be utilized during that portion of the year to reduce potential impacts and stress on the pregnant mares, jennies, and new foals.
2. All horses associated with guided horseback tours will be required to have a negative Coggins test on file. A negative Coggins test will ensure that the horses being used in the tours do not carry the Equine Infectious Anemia virus and will ensure that the wild horses in the HMA will not be exposed to that potentially fatal disease.

3. Participants should also remain at least 0.25 miles from the water sources in the HMA to prevent unnecessary stress on the animals.
4. Future gathers and removals will take place when it has been determined that there are excess wild horses and burros in the HMA. Tours will be temporarily suspended during these times to allow for a safe gather environment. The BLM will notify the tour operators prior to beginning gather operations.
5. Tour participants and spectators will not harass (feed, pet, chase, etc.) wild horses and burros if encountered on or near the staging areas, trails or rest stops.
6. In the unlikely event that there is a collision with a horse or burro, the incident would need to be reported immediately to the BLM.

#### **4.9.4. Human Health and Safety**

1. The permittees must assume responsibility for inspecting the permitted area for any existing or new hazardous conditions, e.g., trail and route conditions, land slides, avalanches, rocks, changing water or weather conditions, falling limbs or trees, submerged objects, hazardous wildlife, or other hazards that present risks for which the permittee assumes responsibility.
2. Permittees shall place signs and other warning devices as deemed necessary by the authorizing officer to warn the public of the action taking place.
3. The permittees must insure that first aid services provided at the events have the capability to insure that any accident victim may be located, treated, and evacuated as needed. A reliable communication system shall be provided sufficient to provide immediate contact for the first aid provider (EMT) to local emergency dispatch centers.
4. The permittees must notify the authorized officer of any accident that occurs while involved in activities authorized by this permit which result in death, personal injury requiring hospitalization or emergency evacuation, or in property damage greater than \$2,500. Reports should be submitted within 48 hours in the case of death or injury, or 10 days in accidents involving property damage.

#### **4.9.5. Recreation**

1. All activities must remain on designated roads, trails, and parking areas.
2. SRPs are limited to the north of State Route 160 during the first nine days of upland game bird season in October.
3. Permittess must abide by all required SRP stipulations associated with each SRP.

#### **4.9.6. Visual Resource Management**

1. No new disturbance can created as a result of the events and all materials brought in for the events must be removed.

### **4.9.7. Cultural Resources**

1. Activities must avoid all archaeological sites (including rock art and roasting pit sites) near the Cottonwood Valley Trail System.

### **4.9.8. Noxious Weeds/Invasive Non-native Species**

1. For SRP events, both commercial and single, it is mandatory that all equipment and personal gear is clean and free of soil and vegetation before arrival on site.
2. In single events, an equipment check should be performed as a registration process, and a wash/cleaning station should be available for participants to clean their equipment before leaving the site and potentially bringing weeds with them.
3. With ongoing commercial activities, it is required that vehicles and equipment be washed/cleaned before field use, and should be inspected before leaving the field for excess soil and vegetation. They are required to report weed populations they encounter on trail heads and trails to help us monitor and protect the resources. Education on weed identification can be gained from the Las Vegas office of the University of Nevada Cooperative Extension.

### **4.9.9. Wilderness/WSA**

1. Competitive events, commercial enterprises, motor vehicles, and mechanical transport (bicycles) are prohibited within Wilderness.
2. Commercial services which do not involve prohibited uses *may* be performed if determined to be the extent necessary for activities which are proper for realizing the recreational or other wilderness purposes of the area; however no commercial services within Wilderness are being proposed with this action.
3. Ensure participants are mindful of the location of Rainbow Mountain Wilderness boundaries so that no activities occur therein.

# **Chapter 5. Tribes, Individuals, Organizations, or Agencies Consulted**

**Table 5.1. List of Persons, Agencies and Organizations Consulted**

<b>Name</b>	<b>Purpose &amp; Authorities for Consultation or Coordination</b>	<b>Findings &amp; Conclusions</b>
U.S.D.A Forest Service Spring Mountains National Recreation Area Humboldt-Toiyabe NF	Shawnee Hinman, Special Uses Team	The BLM and Forest Service will coordinate when SRP activities cross both administered lands.

# **Chapter 6. List of Preparers**

**Table 6.1. List of Prepares**

<b>Name</b>	<b>Title</b>	<b>Responsible for the Following Section(s) of this Document</b>
Sendi Kalic	Wilderness Planner	Wilderness
Lisa Christianson	Environmental Protection Specialist	Air Quality
Mark Boatwright	Archeologist	Cultural Resources/Native American Concerns
Sarah Peterson	Hydrologist	Riparian/Soils/Floodplains
Nora Caplette	Natural Resource Specialist	Invasive Species/Noxious Weeds
Fred Edwards	Botanist	Threatened, Endangered, and Special Status Plant Species
Krystal Johnson	Wild Horse & Burro Specialist	Wild Horse & Burro/Grazing/Range Land
Lorri Dee Dukes	Geologist	Geology
Lee Kirk	Outdoor Recreation Planner	Recreation/Human Health and Safety
Amelia Savage	Wildlife Biologist	Threatened, Endangered, and Special Status Animal Species
Kerri-Anne Thorpe	Realty Specialist	Lands/Access
Susan Farkas	Planning and Environmental Coordinator	Environmental Coordinator
Lauren Brown	Restoration Ecologist	Visual Resource Management
Mike Moran	Environmental Protection Specialist	Waste-Hazardous/Solid
Kathy August	Outdoor Recreation Specialist	Recreation