

**United States Department of the Interior
Bureau of Land Management**

**Categorical Exclusion Not Established By Statute
DOI-BLM-UT-C030-2022-0022-CX**

July 2022

Washington County's High Desert OHV Trail Signing

Location: Washington County

St. George Field Office
Beaver Dam Wash National Conservation Area
345 E. Riverside Drive
St. George, Utah 84790
(435) 688-3200



CATEGORICAL EXCLUSION DOCUMENTATION FORMAT WHEN USING CATEGORICAL EXCLUSIONS NOT ESTABLISHED BY STATUTE

A. Background

BLM Office: St. George Field Office

Lease/Serial/Case File No: N/A

Proposed Action Title/Type: High Desert Off-Highway Vehicle (OHV) Trail

Location of Proposed Action: Washington County (see map)

Description of Proposed Action: The Washington County Commission proposes to sign certain existing roads that cross public lands as the High Desert OHV Trail (Trail) in Washington County, supported by funding appropriated by the Utah Legislature. Similar signing activities are being conducted on existing roads in Iron, Beaver, Millard, Juab, Tooele, and Box Elder Counties. Washington County staff would sign the Trail with fiberglass and/or wooden posts and decals, identifying the roads as part of the “backbone” of this Trail. These posts would be placed within the previously disturbed road shoulder or constructed area of the roads, at approximately 1-mile intervals along the Trail and at major intersections. Washington County and the Utah State Tourism Board will produce paper and digital maps of the Trail and information will be posted on their respective websites and social media to promote interest in and use of Trail and assist users with its navigation.

The SGFO monitors motorized vehicle use on routes thorough the field office resources and would continue to do so along this route. BLM traffic counters would be placed at locations where sensitive resource values are known to occur near the Trail, such as cultural resources, threatened or endangered species or other wildlife populations that may be impacted by changing numbers of motorized vehicles traveling on the signed routes. The SGFO, in consultation with other federal and state agencies, would develop appropriate mitigation measures and seek funding to address effects to those public land resource values related to use of the Trail.

The Trail routes that cross BLM-managed public lands in Washington County would initially be 77 miles long, 71 miles on county-maintained Class B and 6 miles on Class D roads, including the Mojave Desert Joshua Tree Road Scenic Backway through Beaver Dam Wash National Conservation Area (BDWNCA) (refer to attached Maps). It would include existing roads that are currently open to motorized travel, as identified in the 2016 Record of Decision (ROD) and Approved Amendment to the St George Field Office Resource Management Plan (BLM approved in 1999, amended in 2001, 2016, and 2021) and the ROD and Approved Resource Management Plan for the Beaver Dam Wash National Conservation Area (NCA) (BLM, approved December 2016).

At Section 1975 (e) (3) of the Omnibus Public Land Management Act of 2009 (OPLMA, Title 1, Subtitle O, section 1975 (e) (3)), Congress identified three Designated Road Areas in the NCA in which public motorized vehicle travel would continue to be allowed only on the small number of roads shown on the legislative map depicting the NCA.

Washington County would sign 21 miles of routes through the NCA, including approximately 4 miles of the Mojave Desert Joshua Tree Road Scenic Backway and 17 miles of routes that form the boundaries of two of the Designated Road Area and are authorized for public motorized vehicle travel. Outside of the NCA, the Trail would follow an existing road that comprises the boundary of the NCA, then travels north on existing routes, including a cherry-stemmed road between the Cougar Canyon and Slaughter Creek Wilderness areas, connecting to a Trail route identified on the Dixie National Forest. The routes outside of the NCA are also currently authorized for public motorized vehicle travel.

Background Information on the Beaver Dam Wash NCA

The “purposes” for the NCA, as defined in Section 1975 (d) (1) of OPLMA, are:

To conserve, protect, and enhance for the benefit and enjoyment of present and future generations the ecological, scenic, wildlife, recreational, cultural, historical, natural, educational, and scientific resources of the Beaver Dam Wash National Conservation Area.

A majority of the 63,645-acre NCA is within designated critical habitat for the threatened Mohave desert tortoise. Desert tortoise can be found throughout the NCA, with highest known densities in the area identified as the Woodbury Desert Study Area. The Mojave Desert Joshua Tree Road Scenic Backway crosses the Woodbury Desert Study Area and would be signed by the County as a Trail route. There are no tortoise exclusion fences or crossing culverts along the Scenic Backway or any of the other Trail routes in tortoise critical habitat in the NCA.

Three other federally-listed species, 31 BLM Sensitive Species, and diverse other wildlife species occur in the NCA. It provides crucial year-long desert bighorn sheep habitat and desert bighorn are frequently observed on the cliffs adjacent to the Scenic Byway.

The 1,047-acre Joshua Tree National Natural Landmark is located within the Woodbury Desert Study Area, adjacent to the Scenic Byway. Other known resource values of the NCA include National Register of Historic Places listed or eligible properties located near the Trail routes that would be signed by Washington County.

B. Land Use Plan Conformance

Land Use Plan Name: St. George Field Office Record of Decision and Resource Management Plan

Date Approved/Amended: March 1999/amended 2001, 2016 and 2021

The Proposed Action is in conformance with the LUP as it is consistent with the following decision(s)(objectives, terms, and conditions):

Objectives:

Chapter 2, Off Highway Vehicle Management, page 46: *BLM's objectives for OHV management on public lands in Washington County will include:*

- a) Provide meaningful opportunities for a diversity of motorized recreation experiences on public lands in Washington County while protecting sensitive resources from excessive disturbance, road proliferation, and human encroachment.*
- b) Establish working partnerships with local and state agencies, user groups, commercial providers, and other interested parties that will facilitate effective OHV program development including the planning for and implementation of successful trail systems and use areas.*
- c) Provide education on OHV safety, etiquette, and environmental awareness, in cooperation with local and state agencies, user groups, schools, and other organizations.*
- d) Provide for adequate mapping, signage, and public information to facilitate user awareness, safety, and compliance with land use prescriptions. Collaborate with applicable state agencies and organizations who share responsibility for the preparation of such materials to ensure timely and accurate presentation.*
- e) Achieve consistency, to the extent practical, with adjacent land management agencies in making use designations, linking trails, and communicating with the public to provide a seamless transition for OHV users across agency jurisdictions.*

Washington County's proposed signing of the Trail would also conform with approved management actions from the 2016 Record of Decision (ROD) and Approved Amendment to the St George Field Office Resource Management Plan, which modified certain OHV area designations (Open, Limited, or Closed) made in the 1999 RMP to be in compliance with 43 CFR 8340.0-5 (f) (g) and (h) respectively 43 CFR 8342.1 (a-d), and related agency policies, in preparation for the development of the OPLMA-mandated Comprehensive Travel and Transportation Management Plan for Washington County (TMP).

Comprehensive Travel and Transportation Management Actions:

CTT-1, page 19: *"The BLM would coordinate transportation management with adjacent federal agencies, American Indian Tribes, state and local governments, and authorized users."*

CTT-3, page 19: Open to Cross Country OHV use: 21,442 acres

Limited to Designated Routes: 386,563 acres

Closed to OHV use: 112, 427 acres

The routes to be signed by Washington County as the Trail outside of the NCA are within the OHV Area Designation "Limited to Designated Routes". Until the BLM completes the OPLMA-mandated TMP, motorized vehicle travel is limited to the existing transportation system found at the BLM ePlanning website <http://bit.ly/2av3Q1i>.

Land Use Plan Name: Beaver Dam Wash National Conservation Area, Record of Decision and Approved Resource Management Plan

Date Approved/Amended: December 21, 2016

The Proposed Action is in conformance with the LUP as it is consistent with the following decision(s)(objectives, terms, and conditions):

Recreation and Visitor Services Objectives (page 58): *Protect NCA resources and recreation values using the following:*

- a) *Trail and facility design;*
- b) *Directional, informational, regulatory, traffic control, boundary and trail signs;*
- c) *Maps and associated digital technology;*
- d) *Appropriate law enforcement;*
- e) *Interpretive materials and educational programs;*
- f) *Citizen stewardship*

Rec-7, page 58: *“Coordinate management of recreational activities and uses with adjacent federal agencies, tribal governments, and state, county and municipal governments.”*

Comprehensive Travel and Transportation Management:

CTT-2, page 65: *“The three areas identified by Congress on Beaver Dam Wash NCA Map as “Designated Road Areas” will be managed in accordance with mandates from OPLMA. Within these areas, roads identified on that map as open to the public will remain open. Except in cases where motorized vehicles are needed for administrative purposes, or to respond to an emergency, all other roads in the Designated Road Areas are closed to motorized vehicle travel by the public. Roads required for motorized vehicle access to valid existing rights will be open to authorized users only.”*

C. Compliance with NEPA

The Department of the Interior, Bureau of Land Management, Department Manual, Part 516 DM, Chapter 11.9, G., (2) and (4) designates the following action as a categorical exclusion:

(2) Installation of routine signs, markers, culverts, ditches, water bars, gates, or cattleguards on/or adjacent to roads and trails identified in any land use or transportation plan, or eligible for incorporation in such plan.

(4) Placement of recreational, special designation, or information signs, visitor registers, kiosks, and portable sanitation devices.

D. D. SIGNATURE(S)

Authorized Officer: _____ Date: _____

Dawna Ferris-Rowley
Field Office Manager
Red Cliffs and Beaver Dam Wash National Conservation Areas

Authorized Officer: _____ Date: _____

Jason R. West
Field Office Manager
St. George Field Office

E. Contact Person

For additional information concerning this CX review, contact:

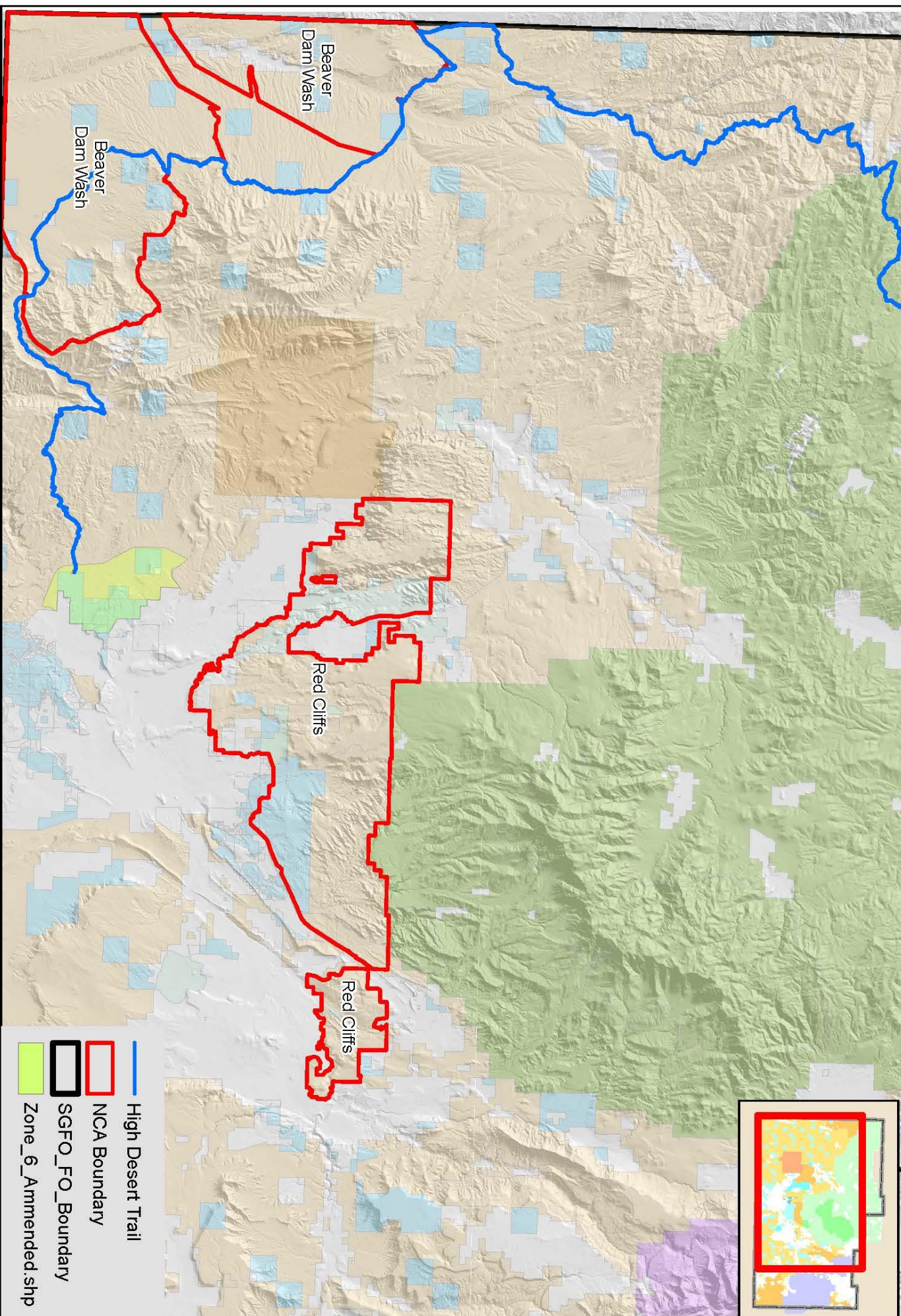
Kyle Voyles
Outdoor Recreation Planner
St. George Field Office
345 E. Riverside Drive
St. George, UT 84790
(435) 688-3274
kvoyles@blm.gov

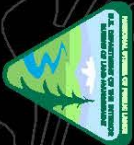


This product may not meet ELM standards for accuracy and content. Different data sources and input scales may cause some misalignment of data layers.

Projection: UTM_Zone 12 North
Datum: North American Datum of 1983 (NAD83)

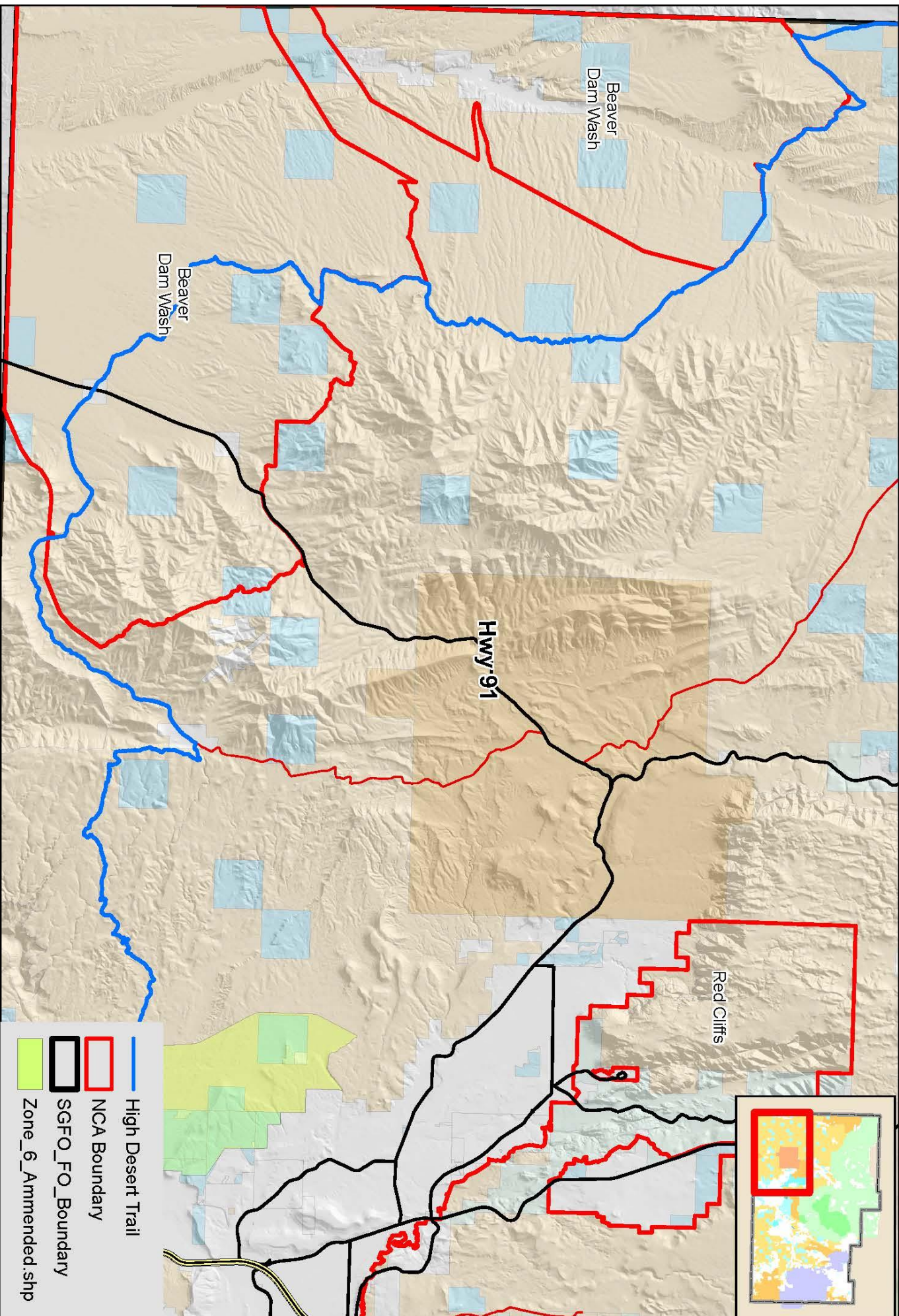
St George Field Office, GIS
Jun 17, 2022



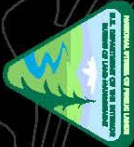


High Desert Trail Beaver Dam Wash NCA

This product may not meet BLM standards for accuracy and content. Different data sources and input scales may cause some misalignment of data layers.
Projection: UTM, Zone 12 North
Datum: North American Datum of 1983 (NAD83)
St. George Field Office, GIS
Jun 17, 2022



- High Desert Trail
- NCA Boundary
- SGFO_FO_Boundary
- Zone_6_Ammended.shp

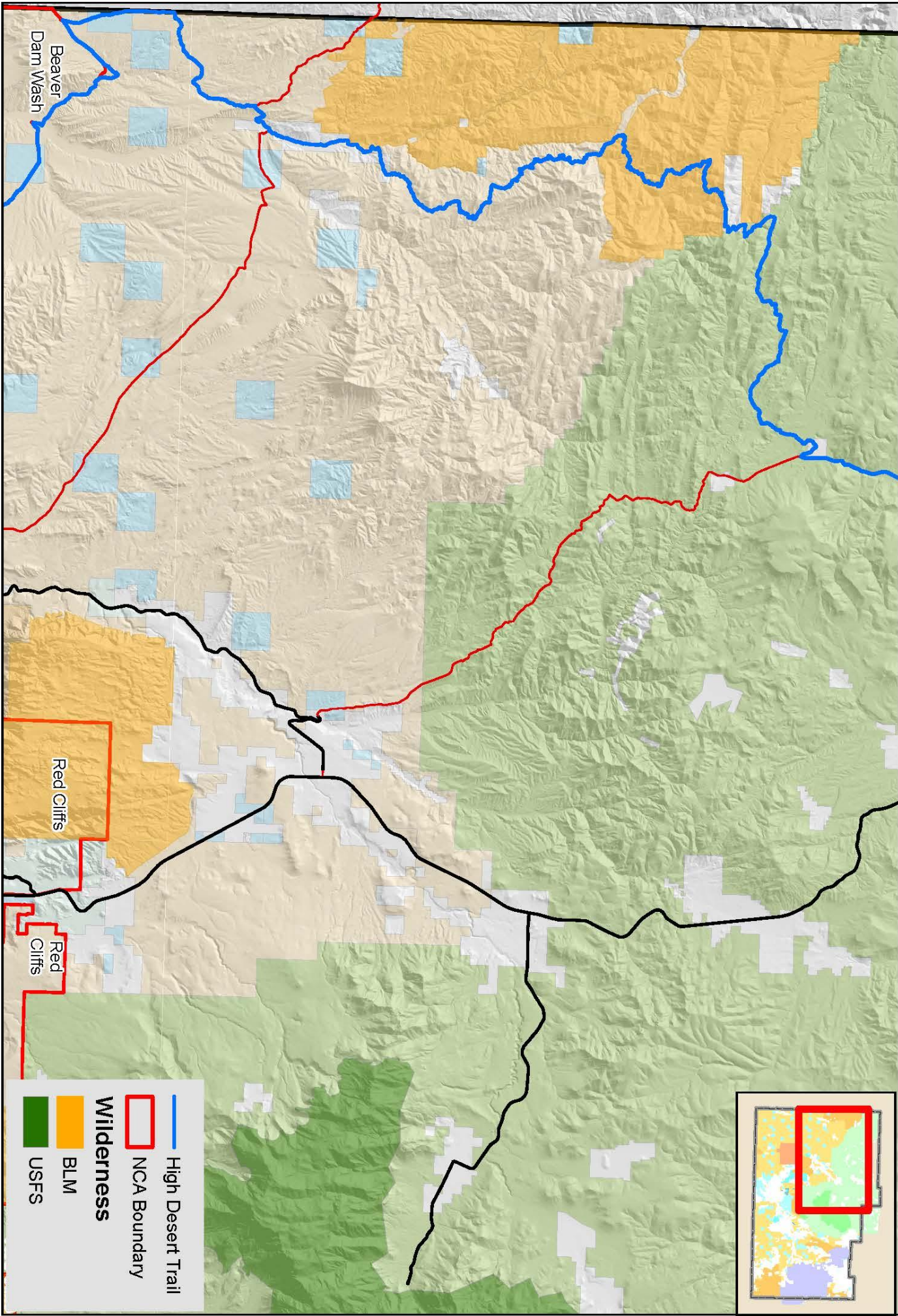


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High Desert Trail Does Pass

This product may not meet BLM standards for accuracy and content. Different data sources and input scales may cause some misalignment of datalayers.

Projection: UTM_Zone 12 North
Datum: North American Datum of 1983 (NAD83)
St. George Field Office, GIS
Jan 17, 2022



High Desert Trail

NCA Boundary

Wilderness

BLM

USFS

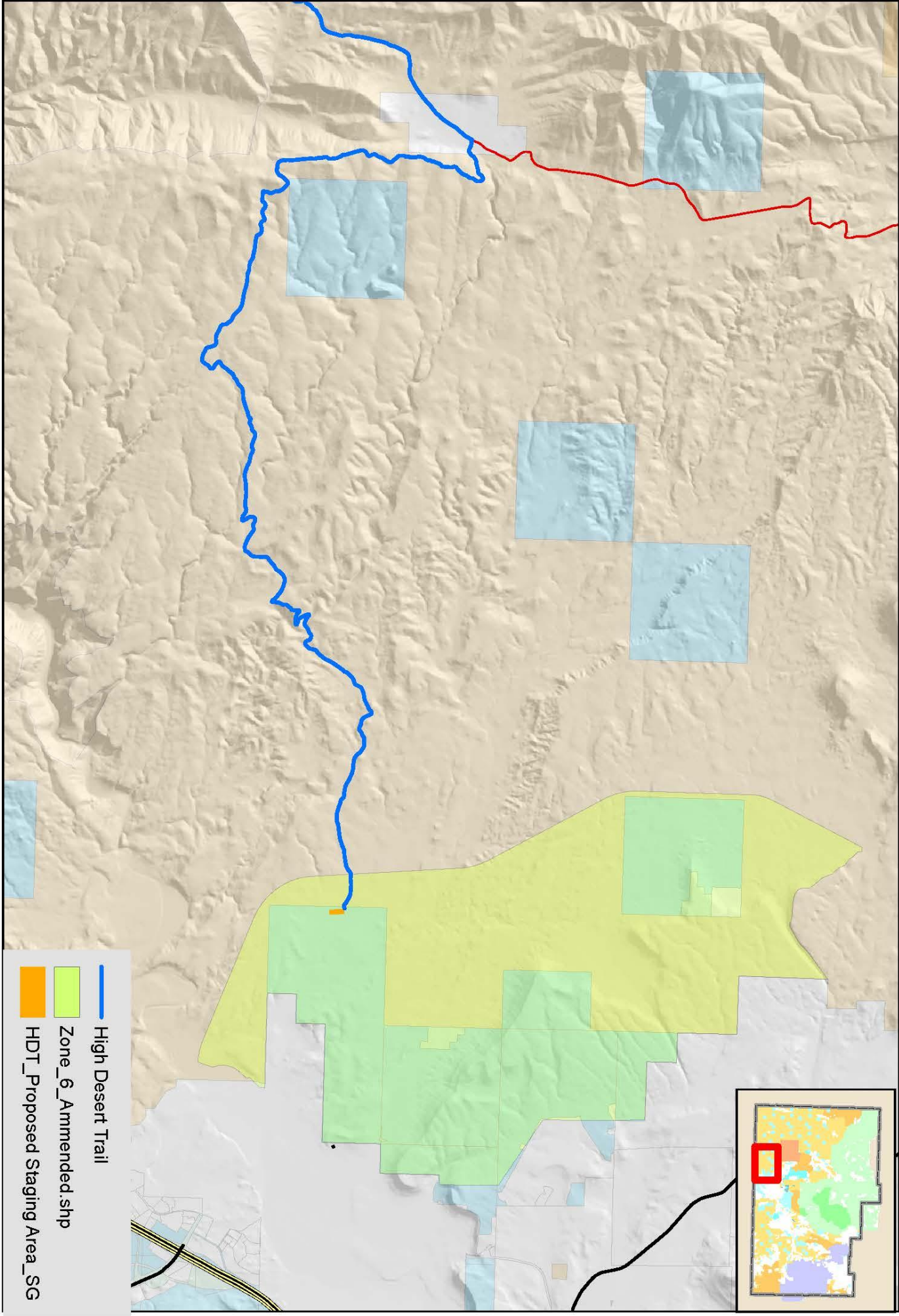


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High Desert Trail Zone 6

This product may not meet BLM standards for accuracy and content. Different data sources and input scales may cause some misalignment of data layers.

Projection: UTM, Zone 12 North
Datum: North American Datum of 1983 (NAD83)
St. George Field Office, GIS
Jun 17, 2022



- High Desert Trail
- Zone_6_Ammended.shp
- HDT_Proposed Staging Area_SG

Categorical Exclusion Review Record

Resource	Yes/No*	Assigned Specialist Signature	Date
Air Quality	No	C. Goff	8/3/22
Areas of Critical Environmental Concern	No	S. Taylor	7/6/22
Cultural Resources	No	K. Cleek, (NCA) A. Van Alfen (SGFO)	8/1/22
Environmental Justice	No	C. Goff	8/3/22
Farmlands (prime or unique)	No	J. Perkins-Frost	7/5/22
Floodplains	No	J. Perkins-Frost	7/5/22
Invasive Species/Noxious Weeds	No	R. Reese	7/1/2/22
Migratory Birds	No	J. Kellam (NCA) S. Taylor (SGFO)	7/1/22
Native American Religious Concerns	No	K. Cleek, (NCA) A. Van Alfen (SGFO)	8/1/22
Threatened, Endangered, or Candidate Species	No	J. Kellam (NCA) S. Taylor (SGFO)	7/1/22
Wastes (hazardous or solid)	No	J. Perkins-Frost	7/5/22
Water Quality (drinking or ground)	No	J. Perkins-Frost	7/5/22
Wetlands / Riparian Zones	No	J. Perkins-Frost	7/5/22
Wild and Scenic Rivers	No	K. Voyles	7/6/22
Wilderness	No	K. Voyles	7/6/22
Geology	No	K. Voyles	7/6/22
Lands/Realty	No	S. Dao	7/1/22

*Extraordinary Circumstances apply.

Environmental Coordinator: _____ Date: _____

F. Extraordinary Circumstances to Categorical Exclusions

The action has been reviewed to determine if any of the extraordinary circumstances (43 CFR 46.215) apply. The project would:

#	Extraordinary Circumstances	Yes/No	Rationale
1	Have significant impacts on public health or safety.	No	Washington County's installation of Trail route markers along existing roads that are open to public motorized vehicle use would not have significant impacts on public health or safety.
2	Have significant impacts on such natural resources and unique geographic characteristics as historic or cultural resources; park, recreation or refuge lands; wilderness areas; wild or scenic rivers; national natural landmarks; sole or principal drinking water aquifers; prime farmlands; wetlands (Executive Order 11990); floodplains (Executive Order 11988); national monuments; migratory birds; and other ecologically significant or critical areas.	No	<p>Washington County's installation of route markers along the disturbed road shoulders of County-maintained Class B and D roads would not have significant impacts on natural resources or the unique geographic characteristics identified as Extraordinary Circumstances at 43 CFR 46.215, including wilderness areas, national natural landmarks, historic or cultural resources.</p> <p>A monitoring program is being implemented by the BLM to assess what effects the anticipated increases in use of the Trail are having on the resource values of the NCA, the Joshua Tree NNL, migratory birds, and designated wilderness areas. If Trail use is determined to be adversely impacting these values and/or special designation areas, mitigation measures would be implemented.</p>
3	Have highly controversial environmental effects or involve unresolved conflicts concerning alternative uses of available resources [NEPA section 102 (2) (E)].	No	Washington County's installation of route markers along the disturbed road shoulders of County maintained roads that are authorized for motor vehicle travel would not result in highly controversial environmental effects.
4	Have highly uncertain and potentially significant environmental effects or involve unique or unknown environmental risks.	No	Washington County's installation of route markers along the disturbed road shoulders of County maintained roads that are authorized for motor vehicle travel would not result in significant, unique, or unknown, environmental risks.

#	Extraordinary Circumstances	Yes/No	Rationale
5	Establish a precedent for future action or represent a decision in principle about future actions with potentially significant environmental effects.	No	Washington County's installation of route markers along the disturbed road shoulders of County maintained roads that are authorized for motor vehicle travel would not establish a precedent for future action or represent a decision about future actions with potentially significant environmental effects.
6	Have a direct relationship to other actions with individually insignificant but cumulatively significant environmental effects.	No	Washington County's installation of route markers along the disturbed road shoulders of County maintained roads that are authorized for motor vehicle travel would not have a direct relationship to other actions with individually insignificant but cumulatively significant environmental effects.
7	Have significant impacts on properties listed, or eligible for listing, on the National Register of Historic Places as determined by the Bureau.	No	<p>The identified Area of Potential Effect (APE) for the proposed action is the HDT corridor, 77 miles long, and 200' wide. The APE corridor includes BLM, SITLA parcels and several private parcels. The BLM is the lead for NHPA analysis. The 200' width incorporates the travel width identified in the <i>St. George Field Office Record of Decision and Resource Management Plan, Amended 2016</i>.</p> <p>The APE has fifty-one previous Class III surveys. The previous surveys provide 44% coverage (35 of the 77 miles) of HDT APE. A total of 20 historic properties have been recorded within the APE. Other resources within the APE include the congressionally designated Northern Route of the Old Spanish National Historic Trail. The HDT crosses the designated OST Corridor at HWY 91, which is a paved, high-traffic highway, with signs already at this intersection. The HDT trail signs would have no effect to the integrity or the landscape, scenic, historic, or recreational values of the OST.</p> <p>The finding for the proposed action is “no historic properties affected”. The finding is based on several factors. 1) The BLM, St. George Field Office is required by the Omnibus Public Land Management of Act of 2009, Sec 1977 to designate a trail for use by OHVs to be known as the “High Desert Off-Highway Vehicle Trail”. General</p>

#	Extraordinary Circumstances	Yes/No	Rationale
			<p>guidance is given for the designation of the trail (currently in progress with our Travel Management Plan), monitoring for impacts, rerouting, placement of signage, and distribution of maps. 2) The majority of the HDT corridor are County B roads (71 miles of the 77 total are County B roads) to which the SGFO adheres to state code 72-3-103 (roads are constructed and maintained by Washington County). 3) Installation of signs in disturbed road shoulder would have minimal potential to impact cultural resources. 4) Monitoring for potential impacts due to increased vehicle use will be conducted. Traffic counters will be placed by the BLM at key points to analyze indirect effects that may occur to increased traffic. 5) Any new additions to the HDT (routes, trailheads, pullouts, kiosks) will be separately analyzed in the future. The BLM consulted with Utah State Historic Preservation Office and has received concurrence (7/26/2022) on our determinations.</p>
8	<p>Have significant impacts on species listed, or proposed to be listed, on the List of Endangered or Threatened Species, or have significant impacts on designated Critical Habitat for these species.</p>	No	<p>Washington County's installation of route markers along the disturbed road shoulders of County maintained roads that are authorized for motor vehicle travel would not have significant impacts on species listed, or proposed to be listed, on the List of Endangered or Threatened Species, or have significant impacts on designated Critical Habitat for these species.</p> <p>A monitoring program is being implemented by the BLM to assess what effects potential increases in the use of the Trail are having on desert tortoise and designated critical habitat. If Trail use is determined to be adversely impacting desert tortoise, mitigation measures would be implemented in coordination with the USFWS. Additionally, monitoring will help inform managers of resource damage as a result of increased use that may pertain to modeled suitable habitat</p>

#	Extraordinary Circumstances	Yes/No	Rationale
			for 5 T&E plant species (Holmgren milkvetch, Shivwits milkvetch, dwarf bear poppy, Gierisch mallow, and Siler pincushion cactus).
9	Violate a Federal law, or a State, local or tribal law or requirement imposed for the protection of the environment.	No	Washington County's installation of route markers along the disturbed road shoulders of County maintained roads that are authorized for motor vehicle travel would not violate a Federal law, or a State, local or tribal law or requirement imposed for the protection of the environment.
10	Have a disproportionately high and adverse effect on low income or minority populations (Executive Order 12898).	No	Washington County's installation of route markers along the disturbed road shoulders of County maintained roads that are authorized for motor vehicle travel would have no effect on low income or minority populations.
11	Limit access to and ceremonial use of Indian sacred sites on Federal lands by Indian religious practitioners or significantly adversely affect the physical integrity of such sacred sites (Executive Order 13007).	No	Washington County's installation of route markers along the disturbed road shoulders of County maintained roads that are authorized for motor vehicle travel would not limit access to, or ceremonial use of sacred sites, nor would it adversely impact the integrity of any known sites.
12	Contribute to the introduction, continued existence, or spread of noxious weeds or non-native invasive species known to occur in the area or actions that may promote the introduction, growth, or expansion of the range of such species (Federal Noxious Weed Control Act and Executive Order 13112).	No	Washington County's installation of route markers along the disturbed road shoulders of County maintained roads that are authorized for motor vehicle travel would not be expected to introduce or encourage the spread of noxious weeds or exotic invasive species.

**Categorical Exclusion Not Established by Statute
Decision Document**

Decision

It is my decision to implement the action described in Categorical Exclusion DOI-BLM-UT-C030-2022-0022-CX.

Decision Rationale

I have reviewed the attached Categorical Exclusion documentation, including plan conformance, NEPA compliance review, and extraordinary circumstances review. Based upon that documentation, I have determined that the action is categorically excluded from further NEPA analysis.

Administrative Remedies

This decision may be appealed to the Interior Board of Land Appeals, Office of the Secretary, in accordance with the regulations contained in 43 CFR Part 4.

Authorizing Official

Authorized Officer: _____ Date: _____
Dawna Ferris-Rowley
Field Office Manager
Red Cliffs and Beaver Dam Wash National Conservation Areas

Authorized Officer: _____ Date: _____
Jason R. West
Field Office Manager
St. George Field Office