



BLM'S PROPOSED MOTOR VEHICLE ROUTES THREATEN BIGHORN MOUNTAIN AREA



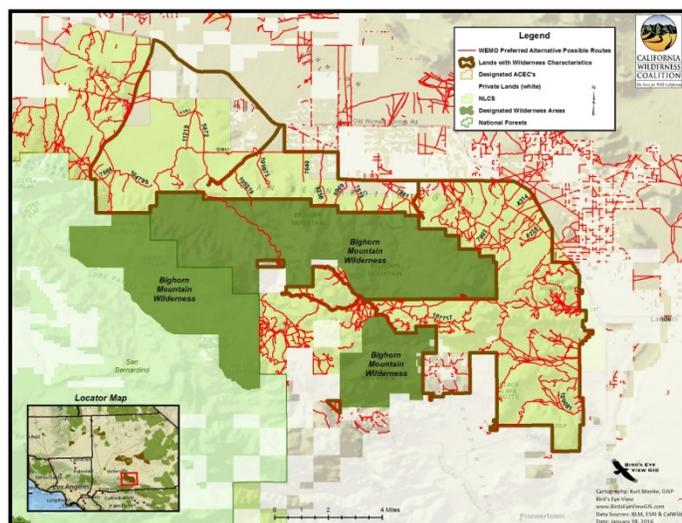
The vast wild areas surrounding BLM's Bighorn Mountain Wilderness include over 51,000 acres of wilderness-quality lands. The area provides an important ecological transition between the Mojave Desert and the San Bernardino Mountains, making it a crossroads of diverse ecosystems and habitats – from chaparral and mixed-conifer forests, to pinyon-juniper and Joshua tree woodlands, to sweeping, creosote-covered bajadas. The area also provides critical habitat for a number of imperiled plant species and is a significant wildlife migration corridor.

Recognizing the Bighorn Mountain area's distinct qualities, the BLM's initiatives under the Desert Renewable Energy Conservation Plan (DRECP) will permanently protect most of it as part of the National Landscape Conservation System, and designate Areas of Critical Environmental Concern to safeguard key wildlife linkages and vital habitat for several exceedingly rare endemic plants.

BLM is proposing to fragment this important ecological zone with an astounding 232 miles of motor vehicle routes. If designated, these routes would jeopardize the area's critical ecological roles and undercut its designation as a National Conservation Area. Our fieldwork ground-truthed approximately 32 miles of proposed routes in the northwestern portion of this vast area and revealed that many proposed routes barely exist on the ground, threaten sensitive riparian areas, and/or appear to serve no purpose.

Facts:

- Bighorn Mountain additions span over 51,000 acres of BLM-inventoried lands with wilderness characteristics.
- WEMO Plan proposes 232 miles of motorized vehicle routes in the area.
- The area includes a diverse array of ecosystems that provide critical habitat for numerous species and outstanding opportunities for wilderness recreation.
- Most of the area will be permanently protected as a National Conservation Area under the BLM's DRECP.



Findings from the Field:

- Numerous proposed routes that receive little or no use, are duplicative with nearby parallel routes, quickly terminate in a dead-end, and/or appear to serve no purpose.
- Numerous proposed routes leading to or through riparian areas that include springs, reeds, grasses, and songbirds (*see right*).
- Multiple instances of illegal trash dumping and off-route travel associated with several proposed routes.
- Numerous proposed routes that barely existing on the ground and are instead naturally occurring desert washes, washed-out, or otherwise indistinguishable from the surrounding desert (*see below*).

