

DEPARTMENT OF THE INTERIOR

Bureau of Land Management

[CA-068-06-1610-00]

California Desert District, Barstow Field Office, Notice of Intent To Initiate Amendment to the California Desert Conservation Area Plan, Multiple-Use Class Changes and Boundary Adjustments to Stoddard Valley and Johnson Valley off Highway Vehicle Areas, San Bernardino County, CA

AGENCY: Bureau of Land Management, Interior.

ACTION: Notice of intent to initiate plan amendment

SUMMARY: Pursuant to the regulations at 43 CFR 1610.2(c) and 1610.3-1(d) implementing the Federal Land Policy and Management Act of 1976 (43 U.S.C. 1712), amendments are proposed to adjust the boundaries of the Stoddard Valley and Johnson Valley Off-Highway Vehicle (OHV) Areas, change existing "multiple-use classifications" (MUC) in the adjusted areas, and change vehicle use designations in the affected areas.

The proposed amendments to adjust boundaries and change MUC designations and vehicle use designations are documented as specific management actions in the approved management plans for these OHV areas. In the Final Stoddard Valley OHV Area Management Plan (September 1993), Management Action (2) under Land Use is to "adjust portions of the OHV Area boundary"; and Management Action (3) under Land Use is to "identify public land within the planning area to be used as an exchange base with which to acquire private land located within the Open Area, and through amendment to the CDCA Plan change those lands from MUC Moderate or Intensive to Unclassified". In the Final Johnson Valley OHV Area Management Plan (August 1992), Management Action (1) under Land Classification and Acquisition is to "adjust the northern area boundary and propose an amendment to change approximately 600 acres of public lands from MUC Moderate and vehicle use designation Limited to MUC Intensive and vehicle use designation Open".

The proposed amendments affect an estimated 10,900 acres of public lands in Stoddard Valley and an estimated 750 acres of public lands in Johnson Valley. The following specific amendments are proposed, consistent with the decisions in the respective management plans:

Stoddard Valley OHV Area

- Change approximately 5,890 acres in portions of sections 4, 5 and 6, T. 6 N., R. 2 W., SBM; portions of sections 2 and 3, T. 6 N., R. 3 W., SBM; portions of sections 19, 20, 30, 31 and 32, T. 7 N., R. 2 W., SBM; and portions of sections 20, 26, 27, 28, 32, 34 and 35, T. 7 N., R. 3 W., SBM from MUC "Moderate" to "Unclassified".
- Change approximately 1,360 acres in portions of sections 3 and 4, T. 8 N., R. 2 W., SBM; a portion of section 19, T. 9 N., R. 1 W., SBM; and portions of sections 15, 22, 23 and 24, T. 9 N., R. 2 W., SBM from MUC "Intensive" to "Unclassified".
- Change approximately 1,040 acres in portions of sections 9 and 17, T. 7 N., R. 2 W., SBM from MUC "Moderate" to "Intensive".
- Change approximately 1,470 acres in portions of sections 4 and 5, T. 7 N., R. 1 W., SBM; and portions of sections 10 and 11, T. 7 N., R. 2 W., SBM from MUC "Limited" to "Intensive".
- Change approximately 330 acres in a portion of section 18, T. 7 N., R. 1 W., SBM; and a portion of section 13, T. 7 N., R. 2 W., SBM from MUC "Intensive" to "Limited".

Johnson Valley OHV Area

- Change approximately 750 acres in sections 13, 14 and 15, T. 6 N., R. 3 E., SBM and in section 18, T. 6 N., R. 4 E., SBM from MUC "Moderate" to "Intensive".

When adopted, the proposed amendments would result in the following net MUC changes:

Stoddard Valley OHV Area Planning Area:

MUC Intensive Increases by 820 Acres
MUC Moderate Decreases by 6,930 Acres

MUC Limited Decreases by 1,140 Acres
Unclassified Lands Increases by 7,250 Acres

Johnson Valley OHV Planning Area:
MUC Intensive Increases by 750 Acres
MUC Moderate Decreases by 750 Acres

For both OHV planning areas, vehicle use designations would change to "open" in new MUC Intensive areas. For the Stoddard Valley OHV planning area, vehicle use designations would change to "limited" in new MUC Limited areas and in new Unclassified areas.

The management plans for these OHV areas recognize that existing boundary configurations, in specific areas, inhibit management efforts to resolve problems associated with impact to private properties. Current MUC designations,

in specific areas, also do not support efforts to acquire private land inholdings within the OHV areas. The proposed MUC changes in Stoddard Valley would dedicate specific public lands outside of the open area boundary as an "exchange base" to facilitate the acquisition of private parcels within the open area. The planned adjustments to open area boundaries, MUC changes and vehicle designations would be consistent with actual OHV use in these areas.

Environmental documentation of impacts, including these proposed amendments, was completed for the management plans for the Stoddard Valley and Johnson Valley OHV Areas. Since preparation of those environmental assessments, critical habitat was designated for the threatened desert tortoise in the region. The proposed amendments do not affect any designated critical habitat.

Information on the proposed amendments, including detailed maps of the affected areas, is available at the Barstow Field Office, 2601 Barstow Road, Barstow, CA 92311 Attn: David Frink (760) 252-6042.

Written comments on the proposed amendments must be postmarked no later than thirty (30) days from the date of this publication in the **Federal Register**. All written comments must be sent to the Barstow Field Office at the above address. Comments, including the names and street addresses of respondents, will be available for public review at the above address during regular business hours (7:45 a.m. to 4:30 p.m., Monday through Friday except holidays). Individual respondents may request confidentiality. If you wish to withhold your name and street address from public review or from disclosure under the Freedom of Information Act, you must state this prominently at the beginning of your written comment. Such requests will be honored to the extent allowed by law. All submissions from organizations or businesses, and from individuals identifying themselves as representatives or officials of organizations or businesses, will be made available for public inspection in their entirety.

Dated: March 23, 1998.

Tim Read,

Barstow Field Manager.

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