



Jeff Knoll
Chairman, “Save the Hammers” Subcommittee
California Motorized Recreation Council

Testimony on HR ____:
The “Johnson Valley National Off-Highway Vehicle Recreation Area Establishment Act”

House Committee on Natural Resources
Subcommittee on Public Lands and Environmental Regulation

Chairman Bishop, Ranking Member Grijalva, and Members of the Subcommittee:

My name is Jeff Knoll and I am the Chairman of the “Save the Hammers” Subcommittee of the California Motorized Recreation Council (CMRC), a nonprofit association comprised of leaders from the largest off-highway vehicle (OHV) organizations in California. I am the Co-Founder of the annual “King of the Hammers” off-road desert-racing event held at the Johnson Valley OHV Recreation Area. I serve on the Bureau of Land Management’s (BLM) Desert Advisory Subcommittee regarding Special Recreation Permits in the California Desert District.

CMRC’s membership includes the Off-Road Business Association (ORBA), California Association of 4 Wheel Drive Clubs (Cal4Wheel), California Off-Highway Vehicle Association (CORVA), American Motorcyclists Association National (AMA), San Diego Off-Road Coalition (SDORC), American Sand Association (ASA), California Nevada Snow Mobile Association (CNSA), and AMA Districts 36 and 37 Off-Road. CMRC also joined forces with the Specialty Equipment Market Association (SEMA), Americans for Responsible Recreation Access (ARRA) and the Motorcycle Industry Council (MIC) to form the “Save Johnson Valley Coalition” dedicated to developing a solution that addresses the needs of the military along with the local and OHV communities. Together, the associations represent millions of OHV enthusiasts in California and across the nation.

I would like to thank Congressman Paul Cook and the Subcommittee for recognizing the need to develop a solution to meet the training objectives of the United States Marine Corps at the Air Ground Combat Center Twentynine Palms while maintaining responsible recreation opportunities in the Johnson Valley OHV Recreation Area. As a former Marine Corps Colonel and long-time resident of Yucca Valley, Congressman Cook is uniquely qualified to identify this remedy.

Johnson Valley is the largest OHV recreation area in the United States, totaling nearly 189,000 acres. It is managed by the U.S. Bureau of Land Management (BLM) and was designated an OHV area under the 1980 Desert Conservation Plan. The open area is used year-round by OHV enthusiasts, stargazers, amateur geologists, photographers, the boy scouts, and the film industry. Johnson Valley offers a unique backcountry experience that attracts campers from around the world. The area is also home to numerous events that draw thousands of motorized recreation competitors and spectators to the area every year.

U.S. Marine Corps Need for Expanded Combat Training

In 2004, the Marine Corps identified the need to train a brigade-level expeditionary force of about 15,000 troops during two months a year. The mission would include integrated air/ground maneuver live-fire and 48-72 hours of continuous offensive operations by three battalion-sized task forces converging on a single objective.

The Marine Corps determined that the Air Ground Combat Center Twentynine Palms would be the appropriate venue for the training exercises if its base perimeter could be expanded. Although Twentynine Palms is already the second largest military base in the United States and three-quarters the size of Rhode Island, the Marine Corps decided it was not large enough. In 2008, the Marine Corps embarked on a four-year environmental impact study which ended in February 2013 with a formal request to Congress to transfer 160,000 acres of the 189,000 acres Johnson Valley OHV Recreation Area to the Twentynine Palms base. While the Marine Corps offered to make 40,000 acres available for OHV activity, this would not be guaranteed since ordnance remains from live-fire exercises would eventually threaten the safety of OHV users and the public.

OHV and Local Community Needs

Ensuring land access for the Marine Corps should not exclude addressing the economic and recreational needs of the local community or OHV enthusiasts. It is therefore important to simultaneously identify the contributions and needs of all stakeholders.

For example, Johnson Valley hosts the annual “King of the Hammers” event – the largest off-road race held in the United States. The event was founded in 2007 with only 13 teams racing over a 35 mile course that included the desert, rock canyons, sand washes, and dry lake beds. Today the specialty built “ultra4” vehicles which average \$150,000 to build and travel over 100 miles per hour while being able to traverse some of the most difficult terrain on the planet. The race now has more than 300 teams competing from around the globe before thousands of fans in person, via the Internet, and on national television. In 2012, the King of the Hammers attracted over 30,000 participants for ten days in February. The BLM estimates that over 50,000 people attended this year’s event. The event has received the highest rating possible by the BLM for the last four years, and has become a model for BLM special recreation permits.

I was a consultant to CMRC and ORBA in preparing the attached “Economic Impact of OHV Recreation at Johnson Valley” (March 2012). The study provides context for Johnson Valley’s importance for OHV activities. Highlights include:

- **Economic Impact:** BLM estimates \$71.5 million annually to the local economy and \$191.2 million to the national economy. If including travel expenses getting to Johnson Valley, the national estimate rises to \$261.5 million in commerce.
- **Visitor Days:** estimates range from 300,000 visitor days a year by BLM to 800,000 days by CORVA. There were 42 event days permitted by the BLM in 2010. For our study we have used the conservative visitor days estimates provided by the BLM.
- **OHV Access:** land area available for off-roading activities in the California desert has shrunk dramatically since the 1970s. Only around 2% of the California desert is open OHV area, and Johnson Valley represents approximately 50% of the available area. There are few suitable alternative sites if Johnson Valley is removed from the inventory with none that offer the experience of this unique location.

- Expanding Needs: OHV recreation is one of the fastest growing categories of outdoor activity in the U.S. Studies have shown a 108% increase between 1980 and 2000. During the same time period, available land area decreased by 48%.

Legislative Solution

This legislation grants federal status to the OHV area by creating the “Johnson Valley National Off-Highway Vehicle Recreation Area.” It would provide the Marine Corps with access to the land in order to fulfill the training mandate identified nearly 10 years ago. This would include up to 42 days a year for large-scale, live-fire field training by air/ground task forces. The public would be able to participate in identifying mutually-compatible times periods for the training exercises.

Small ammunition could be used but large dud-producing ordnance would be prohibited as this material could threaten the safety of the public threaten OHV users, and lead to closure of the OHV recreation area. The land would continue to be managed by the BLM.

Solution Addresses All Stakeholder Concerns

During the nearly five-year debate, the OHV community questioned the need for annexing the land, given the fact that the Marine Corps training requirements needed the land for less than two months a year. The legislation offered by Rep. Cook offers consensus between the Marines Corps training needs, continued growth of the local economy, which is supported by recreational activities, and sustained, motorized recreational access to the California Desert.

- The Marines Corps is offered access to more land than it has requested to meet its training needs which allows flexibility if their mission changes.
- Simultaneously, the land is preserved for OHV recreation and economic contributions to the local community.
- Continued BLM control means the Marines do not to manage and secure the land on a yearly basis. Much of Twentynine Palms is already unsecured and experiences accidental incursions by the public on a regular basis.
- Ordnance restrictions will ensure public safety.
- The OHV community is guaranteed continued access to property set aside for their use as part of the 1980 Desert Conservation Plan one of the last opportunities in an already severely restricted California desert. The Marine Corps is relieved of budget demands for managing and securing hundreds of square miles of public land.

As the Chairman of the CMRC’s Save the Hammers Subcommittee and also authorized to speak on behalf of the “Save Johnson Valley Coalition,” we heartily endorse the legislative proposal put forth by Rep. Cook.

Thank you to Chairman Bishop, Ranking Member Grijalva, Congressman Cook and the Subcommittee members here today for the opportunity to support this important legislative solution. I would be pleased to answer any questions that members of the Subcommittee may have.

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Economic Impact of OHV Recreation at Johnson Valley

Joint Study:

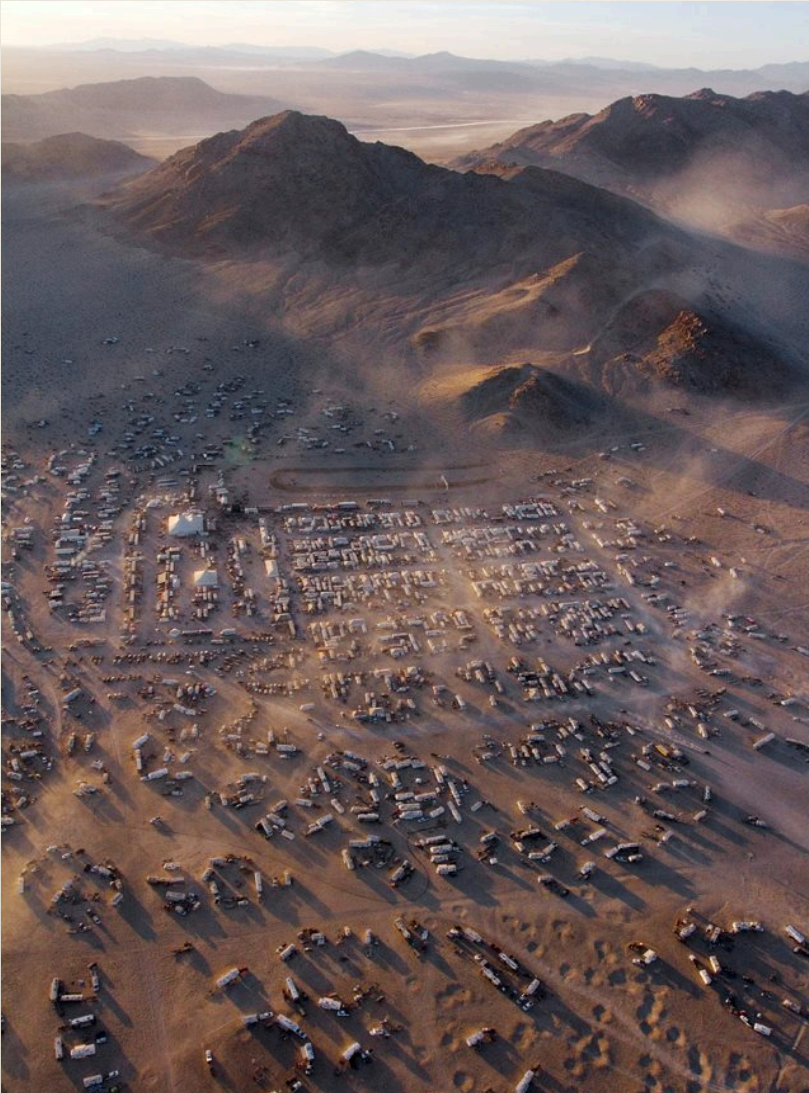
California Motorized Recreation Council (CMRC)

Off-Road Business Association (ORBA)

1701 Westwind Drive, Suite 216, Bakersfield, CA 93301

(March 2012)

Welcome to Johnson Valley OHV area



Johnson Valley is a varied landscape for the off-highway vehicle driver. It is punctuated by steep, red, rocky mountains, rolling hills, open valleys, dry lake beds and sandy washes. Elevations range from 4,600 feet at Hartwell Hills to 2,300 feet at Melville Dry Lake. Vegetation consists of Creosote Scrub, annual grasses, wild flowers and Joshua Trees. It's home to the annual King of the Hammers off-road race (pictured left), which attracted approximately 40,000 visitors in 2012 for the 7 day event. The 189,470 acre, open off-highway vehicle area is the largest in the United States.

Off-road recreation in the area has been a popular activity since WWII, and the area was established as an open OHV area as part of the 1980 California Desert Conservation Plan.

The California Off-Road Vehicle Association (CORVA) reports approximately 800,000 visitor days. The Partnership for Johnson Valley (PFJV) reports 700,000 and the BLM reports around 300,000 visitor days. There is currently no accurate data on visitor days available. There were 42 event days permitted by the BLM in 2010. For this study, we have used the BLM visitor days data located in the DEIS.

The Off-Road Business Association reports that the OHV industry is a 1.5 billion dollar a year industry. Marine base expansion will have a negative affect on this industry.

In 2012 the Off-Road Business Association set out to determine the Economic Impact the Johnson Valley OHV area had on various businesses. Our web-based survey was open for 60 days and asked a host of questions about usage of the area. The following data is representative of 1716 individual responses. A complete Excel data sheet with individual names is available to authenticate this data. Responses are from the following countries and states, giving a snap shot of the wide use the Johnson valley OHV area receives:

International response to the ORBA survey

Canada (18), Australia (3), Denmark (1), England (1), Iceland (1), Sweden (1), Mexico (1).

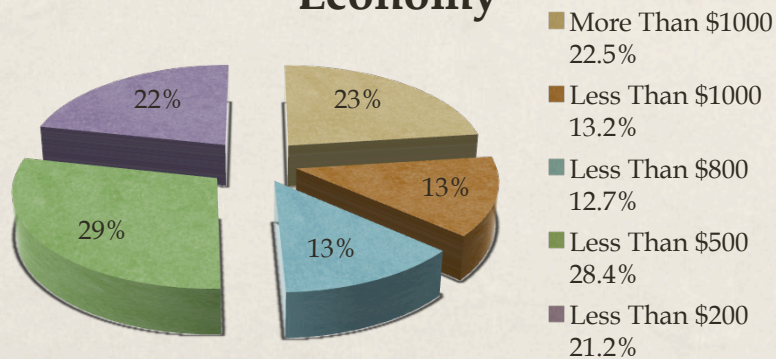
Domestic response to the ORBA survey

Alaska 2
Alabama 1
Arizona 78
California 1182
Colorado 58
Connecticut 4
Delaware 1
Florida 3
Georgia 7
Iowa 5
Idaho 4
Indiana 13
Illinois 8
Kansas 7
Kentucky 4
Louisiana 1
Maine 1
Maryland 9
Michigan 11
Minnesota 6
Mississippi 4
Missouri 4
Montana 6
North Carolina 13
Nebraska 2

Domestic response to the ORBA survey

Nevada 18
New Jersey 18
New Mexico 17
New York 4
New Hampshire 1
Ohio 6
Oklahoma 8
Oregon 21
Pennsylvania 15
Rhode Island 3
South Carolina 13
South Dakota 6
Tennessee 7
Texas 21
Utah 16
Virginia 11
Vermont 1
Washington 41
West Virginia 1
Wisconsin 4
Wyoming 1
Unknown 1

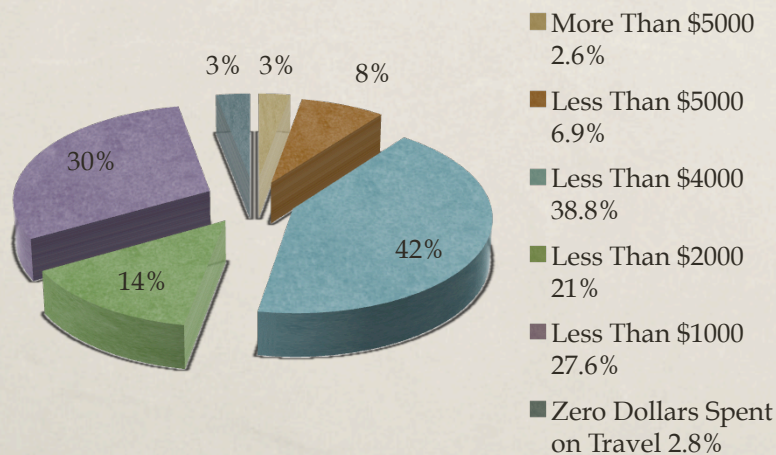
Commerce Into Local Economy



Revenue into the Local Economy.

On average, visitors to Johnson Valley spend **\$645.39** per visit in the local economy. Using the BLM estimates for visitor days found in the Draft EIS for base expansion, that equates into a **\$71.1 Million** annual source of revenue for the local economy. If we use estimates from the leading OHV analysis regarding use of the area the estimates can go as high a **\$191.2 Million** per year.

Commerce Created In Travel



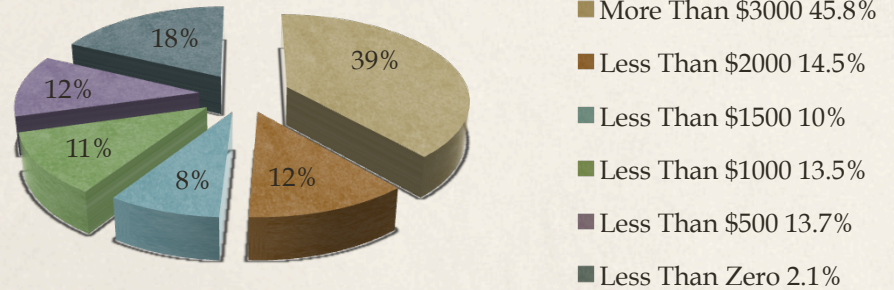
Estimates of National Revenue Based on Travel Expenses to Johnson Valley.

On average, travel expenses from visitors from across the United States and beyond inject \$2353.84 each into the national economy just to get to the Johnson Valley OHV area. The results are staggering using the BLM estimates for visitor days, at \$261.5 Million in commerce.



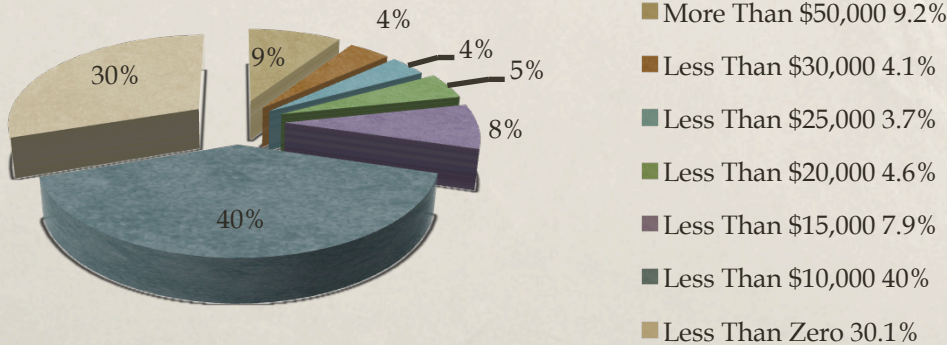


Commerce In Vehicle Maintenance



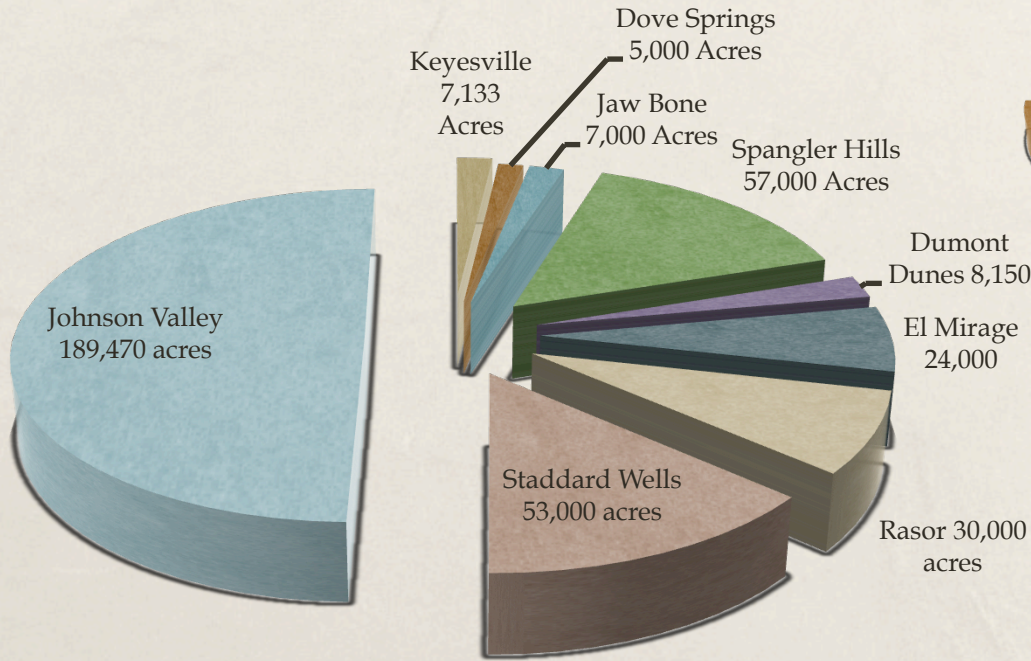
Average vehicle maintenance for visitors of Johnson Valley OHV area is \$1960.54 per visitor resulting in approximately \$217.8 Million in annual revenue generated for the OHV and related industries. Race vehicles require the most maintenance with nearly the entire vehicle of American-made products needing replacement after an event like King of the Hammers. Purchases on an annual basis of motorized recreational vehicles exceeds 1.3 Billion per year with the average visitor spending \$12,001.74. A typical race vehicle can cost approximately \$100,000- \$150,000 to build.

Commerce In Vehicle Purchase

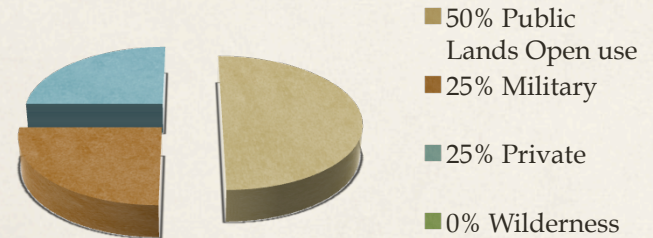


Only 2% of the California Desert is currently open OHV area.

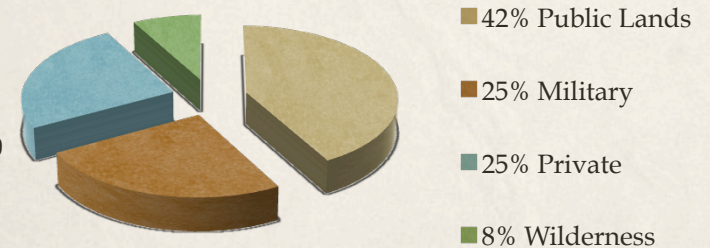
Current Regional OHV Opportunities



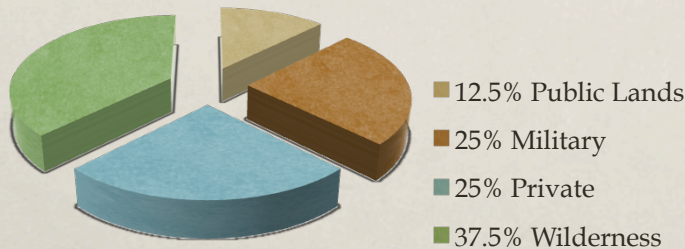
California Desert 1976



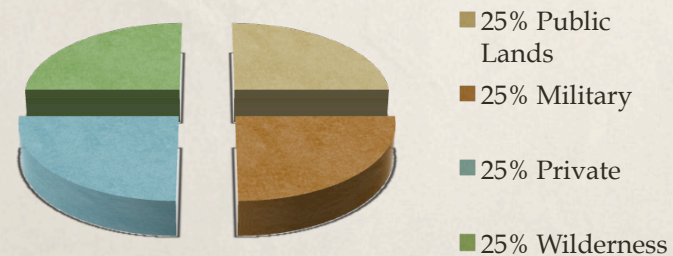
California Desert 1980



California Desert 2007



California Desert 1994



- Johnson Valley OHV area was created by the 1980 California Desert Conservation Plan.
- Johnson Valley represents approximately half of motorized recreation opportunities in the California Desert.
- 1982-2001 OHV recreation was one of the fastest growing categories of outdoor activity in the United States
- 1980-2000 shows an increase in OHV recreation by 108% and it has continued regardless of the slow economy.
- The King of the Hammers race has shown unbelievable growth during a recession with over 40,000 in attendance in 2012, doubling attendance numbers every year for the last 5 years.
- Between 1980 and 2000, OHV users have seen a decrease in recreational areas of 48%.
- In the same period 4-wheel drive registration increased by 74%.
- Visitors from around the world visit the Johnson Valley OHV area every year.
- 20,000 letters have been collected in support of saving the Johnson Valley OHV area.
- 10,815 people have signed a petition to save Johnson Valley.

73% of users polled support a use fee in Johnson Valley

OHV Use fee in Johnson Valley



Public Safety and the 29 Palms Marine Base Expansion



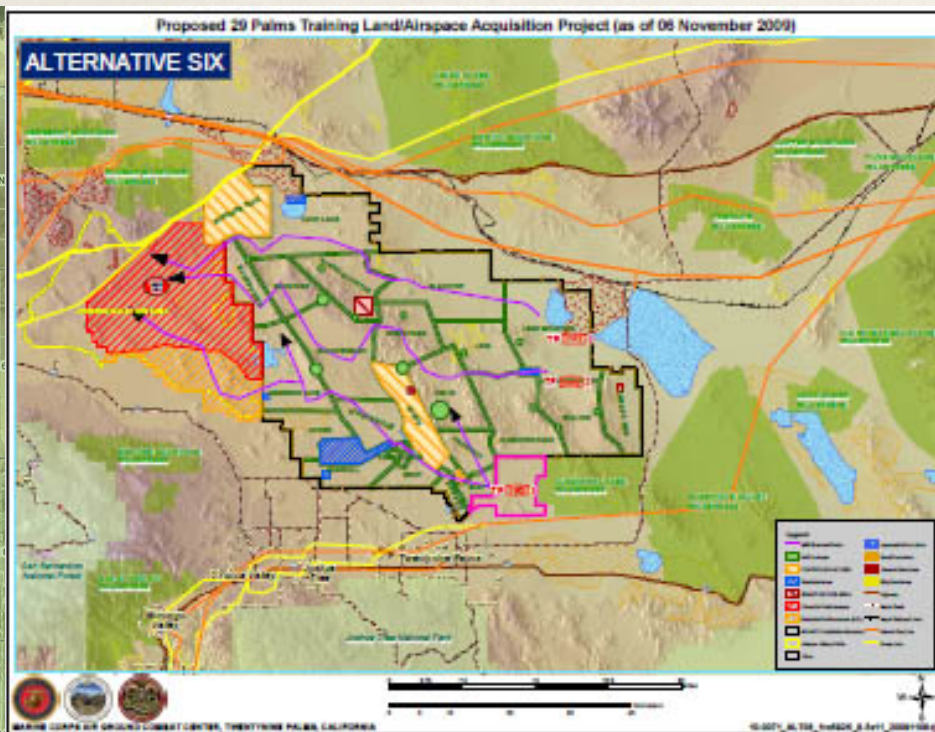
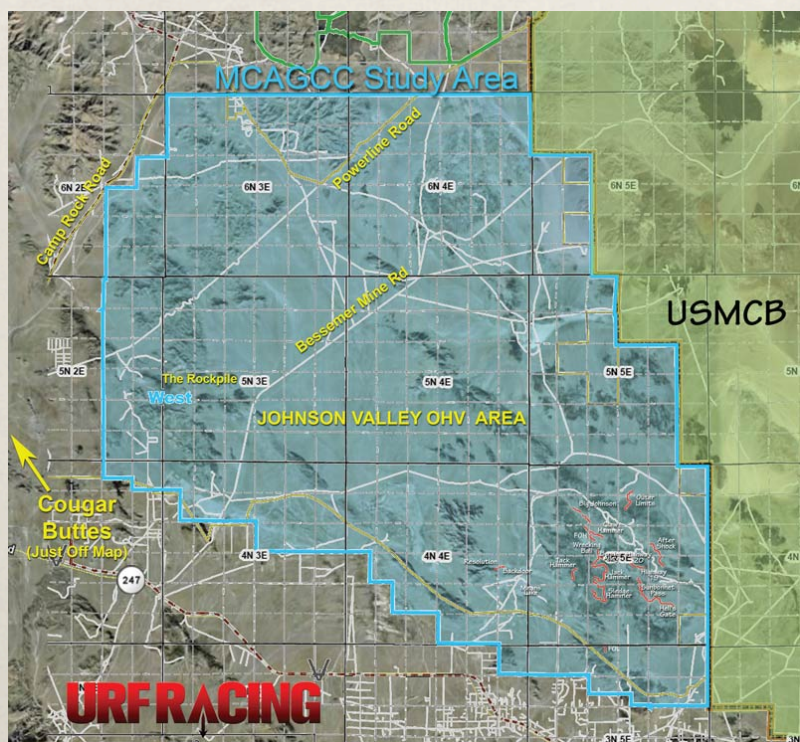
Currently there is no perimeter fencing between the 29 Palms Marine base and the Johnson Valley OHV area. Michael Harper spent 9 days lost on the base in Sept 2011 after unknowingly crossing into the area. http://www.hidesertstar.com/news/article_320b2442-be23-5e97-bb46-a07ea24cd3c9.html Base incursion is a regular problem. The DEIS does not include any provision for perimeter security.

Currently 29 Palms Marine base is the 2nd largest military base in the world $\frac{3}{4}$ the size of Rhode Island. California's Ft Irwin at 642,000 acres is the largest

The base is 932 square miles or 596,000 acres and is located 158 miles from Los Angeles.

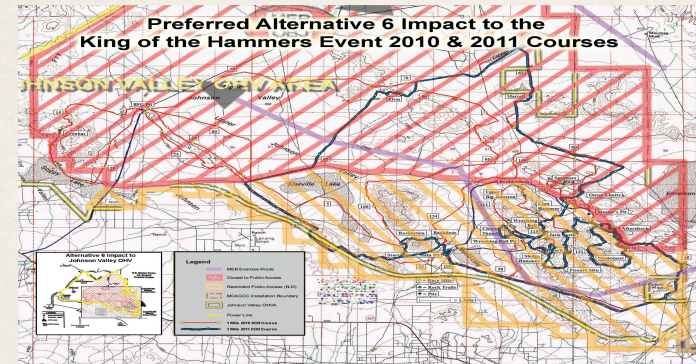
Base expansion will impact approximately 160,000 acres of the 189,470 acre OHV area.

The Marines plan to use this area only 24 days a year for training.

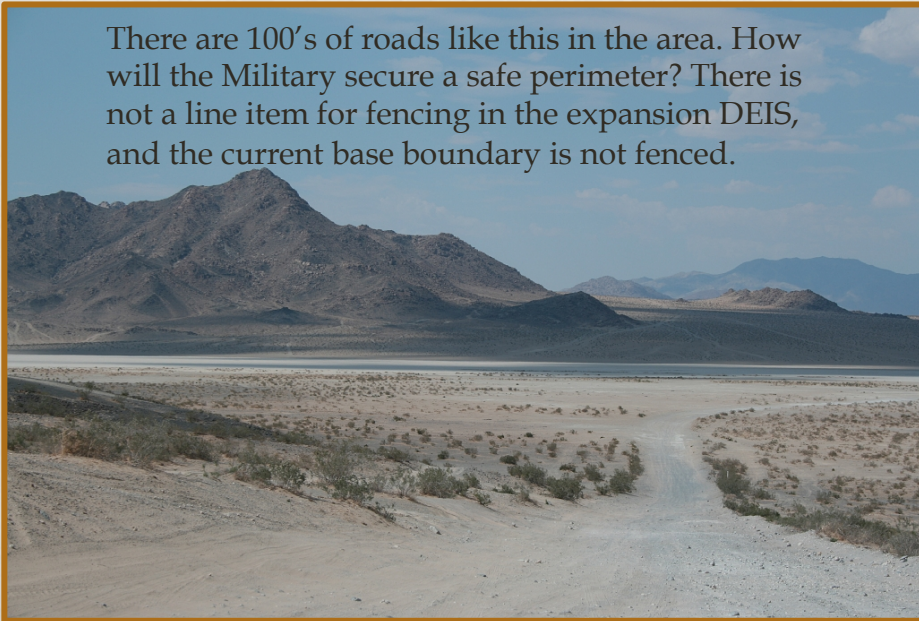


Problems with the 29 Palms Marine Base Expansion

- Economic impact to local economy and national OHV industry.
- Removal of approximately 160,000 acres OHV opportunity.
- Eminent danger to the public due to lack of perimeter fencing.
- Expansion does not allow for a buffer between residents and live fire
- Change in the Marine Corps Mission from 2nd land based Army to a Spearhead, and their return to their amphibious roots
- Department of Defense budget cuts are potentially closing bases, and disrupting our ability to finance our military, does this base expansion make financial sense?
- Does the Marine Corps really need to annex the Johnson Valley OHV area to complete its MEB Training Mission?



There are 100's of roads like this in the area. How will the Military secure a safe perimeter? There is not a line item for fencing in the expansion DEIS, and the current base boundary is not fenced.



\$71.1 Million in annual revenue to the local economy.



Solutions.



Training our military while maintaining recreational opportunity.

- Alan C. Browns 2004 Analysis of Marine Expeditionary Brigade training area's Identifies 4 areas in California to be used in conjunction with 29 Palms, Camp Pendleton, Yuma, and the Port of San Diego.
- The San Diego Port will be used in a simulated manner according to this document.
- Is MEB training's primary focus on logistics?
- Training according to the Draft EIS presented by the Marine Corps identifies only 24 days of training in the Johnson Valley OHV area.
- Can the live fire element be restricted to the current base footprint for MEB Training?
- The BLM currently has a 30 year lease with the Oregon Military Department for 31,300 acres near Bend Oregon through a Permit. BLM retains Management of the area.
- The USFS has permitted the Marine Corps Mountain warfare training center near Bridgeport California on 46,000 acres. The USFS retains management of the area.



Permit, Marine Corps MEB Training in Johnson Valley and keep management with the BLM

Pros:

- Saves tax payer's money
- Does not require approval from Congress
- Requires safe perimeter only 24 days a year
- Keeps property management in the hands of the BLM
- Retains Public Access to 189,000 acre OHV area
- Continued benefit to local economy
- Allows potentially even bigger MEB training footprint
- Everyone wins.

Cons:

- Removes live fire element from training in Johnson Valley
- Marine Corps required to meet the provisions of the BLM permit process.

Permitted Military Training in the Western States.

Bridgeport California

The Marine Corps Mountain Warfare Training Center (MCMWTC) is located on California Highway 108 at Pickel Meadow, 21 miles northwest of Bridgeport, California and 100 miles south of Reno, Nevada.

The MWTC is cited at 6,762 feet, with elevations in the training areas ranging to just under 12,000 feet. In an agreement between the U.S. Forest Service and the Marine Corps, the MWTC occupies and is permitted to train on 46,000 acres of the Toiyabe National Forest. While the land remains under management of the U.S. Forest Service, this letter of agreement permits use of the area to train Marines in mountain and cold weather operations.

Bend Oregon

The Biak Training Center (BTC) consists of over 31,300 acres of training range including a designated LZDZ for air assault and airborne operations. The BTC is used by all services to include the Army National Guard, Air National Guard, US Navy Construction Battalions, US Marine Corps, as well as regular Army forces including Special Forces and Rangers.

Since World War II, the U.S. Army has conducted training exercises on approximately 31,000 acres of BLM land located east of the Redmond Airport. Today, the Oregon Military Department continues the traditional use of this land, where soldiers with the Oregon Army National Guard and U.S. Army train with tracked and wheeled vehicles. No live-fire exercises are conducted outside a controlled range.

The Oregon Military Department works cooperatively with the Prineville District BLM to help provide for the area's cultural and natural resource protection through range rehabilitation, wildland fire protection and safety programs.