

ALAA Newsletter
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1421 Latchford Avenue
Hacienda Heights, CA 91745

FIRST CLASS MAIL



**AMERICAN LANDS ACCESS
ASSOCIATION, INC.**

Protecting the Public Lands for the Public

<http://www.amlands.org/>

July August September 2012



AMERICAN LANDS ACCESS ASSOCIATION

NEW MEMBERSHIP and ANNUAL RENEWAL FORM

PLEASE PRINT ALL INFORMATION

(Must be postmarked or received by December 31 each year)

Member/Contact Name: _____
Last First

Last First

Organization Name _____

Address: _____
Street City State Zip

Mailing Address: _____
(If different than above)

Phone Number: _____
Primary Residence Primary Business (if any)

Email Address _____
Name Address

Name Address

Member Signature _____ **Date:** _____

Send Completed form with renewal Dues to: Dues are: \$25.00 for individual/couple
\$50.00 for a club or society

New Member _____ **(X) Renewal** _____ **(X) Amount Enclosed \$** _____

American Lands Access Association

C/O Membership Chairman

2857 Addison Pl

Santa Clara, CA 95051-1705

Make Checks payable to: American Lands Access Association (ALAA)

A grassroots 501-C-4 Educational, non-profit organization dedicated to keeping public lands open for the public



American Lands Access Association, Inc.

Protecting the Public Lands for the Public

July August September 2012

Dues Are Due!!!

Hello ALAA Members,

As this is the last newsletter before the end of December we want to remind you that it is time to renew your membership. ALAA is financially on the CALENDAR YEAR. This means dues are due January 1st of each year. The ALAA Board at their annual business meeting in Minnesota, has moved to contact all those in arrears and ask for renewal, and if they are not heard from by October 1st to drop them and move on. So please use the attached renewal form and don't forget to provide up-to-date contact and e-mail information.

ALAA President's Message

By Dick Pankey

ALAA at Minnetonka

When the Show opened at noon on Friday the American Lands Association was there. ALAA had an information table where we told everyone who we could get to stop and listen about the challenges facing all rockhounds and users of our public land. We were kept busy because there were many at the show that were concerned and interested in the future of our public lands. One of the first thing that attracted people to our Info Table was the array of bright yellow Rockhound Sticker items we had for sale. The purpose of the Info Table was to introduce ourselves and tell people about what is going on with pending regulations and legislation. For greater detail we referred people to the ALAA web site – www.amlands.org. Each person that stopped to talk with us was given a copy of the AFMS Code of Ethics. All Federations are welcome and encouraged to have an ALAA Info Table at their shows. If any federation or club would like to have an Info Table at their show or event please contact me for details.

ALAA held its annual business meeting during the show at Minnetonka. This year we were able to schedule the meeting for Saturday afternoon at the show site which was very convenient for us and anyone who wanted to attend. This was a classic business meeting with officer and director reports, election of officers and director for 2013, approval of the 2013 budget, and old and new business. The detailed minutes will be published in the ALAA Newsletter.

We opened the meeting with an In Memoriam to recognize the recent passing of Bill Burns and Howie Whiting. Bill was a founding member of ALAA and served continuously as a director until 2011. Howie was a long time involved supporter and advocate. Thanks to both of these gentlemen for their dedicated service.

ALAA will have new leadership in 2013; Shirley Leeson was elected President, Lauren Williams

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For current information and alerts go to the ALAA Web Page at <http://www.amlands.org/>. You can also download a copy of the current newsletter or peruse the archive of previous editions.

President's Message

(Continued from page 3)

Vice President, Susy Martin Secretary and Ruth Bailey Treasurer. Tom Noe, Tom Burchard and Dick Pankey were elected directors for a 3 year term and Kim Campbell Erb was elected to fill a vacant director term for the remaining 1 year. Welcome to Lauren, Susy, Tom and Kim.

The next ALAA Business Meeting will be held September, 2013 in Jacksonville, FL.

Membership

ALAA operates on a "calendar year" so each year ALAA members should renew their membership and pay their dues in December. Remembering to pay dues in December seems to be a challenge for some (many) members, especially Society Members. I have two suggestions to help make the process easy for you. On the inside front cover of this Newsletter is the Membership/Renewal Form. After you have read this current issue, tear off the form, fill it out, write your check and put them both in a stamped envelope. You can mail it now or anytime before the end of the year; but why not just mail it now so you don't forget. If you are getting this Newsletter as the representative for a Society Member your task is a little different. You need to tear out the form and fill it out and give it to your society's treasurer to write the check and mail. Start the process now because it typically takes time to go through the "Society Process". For both individuals and society members be sure to fill out the form completely, we need ALL of your contact information – address, telephone number and especially, your e-mail address. ALAA maintains an e-mail list so that we can send you important and timely information about pending legislation and regulations. It is especially important that each Society Member designate a contact person and include that person's contact information on the application/renewal form. The contact person should act as a liaison between ALAA and the society, receiving

information from ALAA and passing it on to the other members of the society. As with any organization, communication is key. If we don't have an e-mail address for you we can't send you important and timely information.

So don't get left out. Send in your renewal and dues.

BLM, Quartzsite and You

By Dick Pankey

The American Lands Access Association meeting was such a success last January that the third annual meeting is scheduled for Quartzsite, Arizona in January 2013. An open meeting of the American Lands Access Association is planned for Friday evening, January 25th, at 6:30 PM, at the Quartzsite Alliance Church, 720 Desert Vista on the north side of Quartzsite.

Attend this meeting to learn about ALAA and how you can be involved in saving access to our public lands. We will have an open forum on pending legislation and regulations, and what is happening with the BLM and USFS. Bring your questions and ideas.

This meeting should be of interest to all rockhounds and to anyone who recreates on and uses public lands. The purpose of this meeting is for outreach to rockhounds and the public at Quartzsite; to let them know about ALAA and what we do. It is to let rockhounds and the public know the legislative and regulatory challenges and issues facing all of us and how they can and should be involved.

This is a special invitation to all rockhounds and users of our public lands to attend this important meeting. If you can attend, please do so, and show how many rockhounds care.

Be sure to check the December issue of the ALAA Newsletter and the ALAA web site for details about the meeting and speakers.

**RECAP OF THE ANNUAL
ALAA BUSINESS MEETING
Minnetonka, Minnesota
Saturday, July 28, 2012**

After the introductions by Dick Pankey, President, Roll Call and establishment of a quorum, the Elections of Directors for the coming 2013 year were voted on.

Three year term:

- Tom Noe, of South Bend, Indiana
- Tom Burchard, of Ogden, Utah
- Dick Pankey, of Pittsburg, CA

The vacant position on the 2 year Directors list was filled by Kim Campbell Erb of Anaheim, CA.

The Election of Officers were as follows:

- President, Shirley Leeson, of Tendoy, ID
- Vice President, Lauren Williams, of Idaho Falls, ID
- Secretary, Susy Martin, of Lancaster, CA
- Treasurer, Ruth Bailey of Santa Clara, CA

Two items passed by the Directors was to have Shirley Leeson send a letter to all those clubs and individuals ALAA has been carrying on the list of members who have not paid dues in 2011 and 2012. This has already been accomplished.

ALAA runs on the calendar year. Jan through Dec. Dues are Due Jan 1st. ALAA has not sent out dues notices in the past, but from this time forward there will be a reminder on the front page of the 4th Quarter Newsletter that DUES ARE NOW DUE. We are sorry for the confusion, regional and the national organizations have differing beginning dates. It is hoped that this will clear things up.

The second item was a proposal to have ALAA join as a group member, the New Mexico Off Highway Vehicle Alliance. It was noted that the Travel Management Plan in the Santa Fe National Forest has come to a conclusion and without notification the forest supervisor has decided to shut down over 70% of the roads and trails. NMOHVA intends to appeal and if that isn't successful they will go into court. This could be a land mark case and decision and for that reason, ALAA has voted to join NMOHVA.. Dues to join were added to the ALAA budget. We are still "group" members of both Blue Ribbon Off Road Vehicle Assn. and CORVA, California Off Road Vehicle Assn. The goals of all three of these off road organizations are the same as ours, keeping public lands open for all the public. Remember: once you leave the highway to visit collecting sites, YOU are off road people too.

Shirley Leeson, President-Elect
Rockhound Activist

beauholland@centurytel.net and shirley-leeson@cox.net

ADOPT A CONGRESSMAN

Shirley Leeson – shirleyleeson@cox.net

At first glance this might seem impossible. But if you think about it today, right now is the time to contact your Congressman or Senator, or both. They are home hoping for re-election and they are hosting town meetings.

Here's what to do: Contact your Congressman's local office. Get to know the staff and what their particular expertise is. Contact them with a positive statement, please make sure your facts are correct, and see what they say. Contact the office once a week with other ideas and concerns. Always be polite and attentive. You won't get anywhere if you are even the slightest bit antagonistic or obnoxious. Email the Congressman with your thoughts and concerns.

Did you know that Congress and the Sen-

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ADOPT A CONGRESSMAN

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ate make it almost impossible for you to contact someone out of your district? If you haven't tried, here's the obstacle. You are asked for your zip code. If you aren't in the zip code for that particular Senator or Congressman, you can't reach them – your emails won't be accepted. You can call them, but that can get expensive. And letters take about three months to go through the various security measures before the Congressman's office even receives them.

Right now if your Congressman or Senator hasn't been interested in your concerns, now is the time to contact the person running for that office and see what they have to offer....to see if their ideas coincide with yours.

Contacting local and state officials works the same way. Watch the paper for meetings you can attend. Or call their office and ask what is on the agenda. These days it's not only the Forestry or the BLM who closes public lands, but the Fish and Wildlife who comes in and wants "areas of concern" for a particular animal or plant fenced or closed. Or the EPA, who is concerned with dirty water or pollution. You have to be ever vigilant....any time, any place your rights to use public lands can be thwarted by agencies other than Forestry and BLM.

If you have luck with your "adoption" please let us know, we want to see what we can accomplish – one person, one Congressman at a time.

SAGE GROUSE, THE LITTLE BIRD WHO PUFFS UP AND STRUTS AROUND, MUCH LIKE A POLITICIAN...

The Next "Spotted Owl" Fight
Shirley Leeson

What has a little bird have to do with access to public lands? This little bird is being

suggested for endangered species designation. Why should it effect YOU? Because every time something like this happens, recreationists loose ground in the struggle for access to public lands.

What do you know about the sage grouse? It's going to be the next "Spotted Owl" but on steroids. Go to your search engine and you will find an interesting bird. Maybe because pictures of it have been shown during mating season when the male gets all "puffed up" and struts around, (much like a politician) you might remember this bird. As the name implies it stays close to the ground and lives in or near sagebrush, because of this it has lots of predators, coyotes, crows/ ravens, egg-eating varmints, etc.

Here's where it becomes wild.... These birds live in large numbers in at least eleven western states, so why are the sub-enviros, namely the "save the 'whatever the plant, fish, fowl or animal of the day is,'" trying desperately to have the U.S. Fish and Wildlife put these birds on the endangered list? We can only guess, but remember what usually happens, the habitat area is usually closed. Then it's decided to put in a buffer zone to make sure they are protected. And finally the whole area is closed for the good of whatever they are trying to protect.

This sub-group of enviros have decided that the sage grouse is the next "spotted owl." You all remember what happened when the "save the spotted owl" took off and became the cause celeb. It actually closed down most, if not all, of the lumber industry...for the good of the spotted owl, be damned the lumber industry and the devastating effect it had on the economy of rural western communities of the United States. And let's not even go into the effects of the lack of management of the forests that has come back to haunt us with these horrific fires.

I'm warning you now because more federal land will be lost to recreation. We can't afford to have any more land put into Wilderness or "protected lands" for various specials interests.

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Sage Grouse

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There just isn't that much land left. So be vigilant. Watch your local papers for "town meetings" requesting input on sage grouse population in your area. You might see something like "Sage Grouse Conservation Scoping." Please let us know so we can get the word out. Rockhounds and recreationalists aren't the only ones who will be effected, hunters and especially ranchers will also feel the impact. We're all in this together. The Governors of Idaho and Utah have created special task forces to combat this proposed threat to close lands. If the states act and have a "sage grouse" plan in place the federal government is less likely to step in and create a sweeping mandate covering all areas of the western states where sage grouse hide.

.....oh yea, the rest of the story on the spotted owl. After "they" couldn't blame the logging industry for the decline in the spotted owl population, they found another owl called the "barred owl" had taken over the spotted owl territory and shoved the poor spotted owl out. There are now orders in some places to shoot this mean, bully, owl.

So much for all Gods creatures, large and small.... It's who you know that picks and chooses which species to save.

Let me introduce myself...

Lauren Williams

I am Lauren Williams your ALAA Vice-President Elect. I live in Idaho Falls, Idaho. On November 1 I will become the AFMS Immediate Past President. I was NFMS President in 1992-1993. My first AFMS experience was the show in Ventura, California, 1990. I was AFMS editor in 1991-1992.

My wife, Shirlene, and I have one son, Troy. I spent most of my life as a Draftsman, that's making drawings so that things can be made; most of that time was for the government. I

was born and raised in Rexburg, Idaho. I am an Idahoan, except for five years that we lived in Salt Lake City.

I know a little about farming/ranching, that was the primary industry in Eastern Idaho during the 40's and 50's. What I did not know about farming and ranching, my education was finished by a brother-in-law and by my father-in-law after I married one of his daughters.

While we lived in Salt Lake the Utah chapter of the Sierra Club gave me a good education in how they did things, more on this in a later message. I have never belonged to the Sierra Club, I belonged to the Wasatch Mountain Club for 21 years. As a member of the Wasatch Mountain Club, my first introduction to rocks is where I learned that they were either good or bad finger/toe holds - rock climbing. Rocks for polishing or making jewelry, well that was still years away.

UTAH ALAA Report:

In Utah, the Bureau of Land Management's Resource Advisory Council (RAC) has been an interesting group for me to work with over the last year. While composed of 15 distinct individuals, each with unique perspectives and constituencies, the RAC functions in a remarkably harmonious and respectful fashion. Accompanying them on field trips and watching their deliberations has been very enlightening; educationally and as a window into the real-world of the BLM. Any concerns that the RAC might be a "rubber-stamp" for State Director Juan Palma were quickly dispelled, he really values their input. They always seem to welcome constructive comments from this "interested citizen" during their "Public Comment" times. Certainly they are glad someone "gives a hoot" about what they are doing. I hope that I am selected as a member in the near future.

In addition, since Utah has had a fully functional RAC for several years, the U.S. Forest Service has co-opted the BLM's existing group as

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UTAH ALAA Report:

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their Utah "Recreational Resource Advisory Council." (ReRAC). Last month's (August 7-8) agenda in St. George thus included USFS concerns on campground fees and amenities, as well as BLM concerns on Sage Grouse, travel plans, routing of roads through a National Conservation Area, and indiscriminate target shooting in Urban/Rural interfaces. The RAC meeting agenda is prepared by Coordinator Sherry Foot in the Salt Lake City Office, but the RAC can add items it chooses. They clearly steer away from political issues like oil and gas leasing, though keeping an eye on cooperative ventures like resolving RS2477 roads by a multi-government and interest-group coalition in the Cedar City area.

The RAC chooses it's own counsel, but usually welcomes written comments from interested parties regarding issues they are considering. For example, at the St. George meeting, Director Palma gave an update on his "Instruction Memorandum" to his field offices regarding preparation of "Travel Plans", the implementation step following approval of their Resource Management Plans. Accordingly, I commented directly at the meeting, but then sent the following email for their consideration:

XX
Bureau of Land Management
Utah State Office
Attn. Ms. Sherry Foot, RAC Coordinator

Dear Sherry,

During "Public Comment" time at the August 2012 RAC meeting in St George, UT, I pleaded for Director Palma's Travel Plan Instruction Memorandum to include an easy way for vehicle dependent hobbyists, like "Rock Hounds," to gain access to "Closed Routes." On my way home to Brigham City, I found a perfect example of my concerns just northwest of Salina, off of US-50. Even though the Director's IM had not yet been issued, the Richfield Field Office's excellent

RMP process has long since been completed and they have now implemented their Travel Plan and signed most routes. There is a two-track trail at GPS coordinates (38*58.58' N, 111*57.90' W to 38*59.41 'N, 111*57.85' W) extending about 2 miles north from the highway, alongside of which we have historically collected "Salina Blue Agate" for jewelry making. At the the cattle fence is a sign "Designated Routes Only", but no route number (therefore closed to travel). In the RFO RMP this route was shown as "open." Just northwest along US-50 is another road, signed with a route designation (therefore open to travel) across the mountains to Fillmore.

We (casual mineral collectors) have typically used this "Salina Blue" route a few times each summer for our field trips, for about 1/2 a day each time. But the RFO doesn't currently have a procedure for us to request that the route be re-designated as "Open to motorized travel", or even to request a simple "one-time trespass permit" by phone or email. There also are no maps of which routes are open or closed (I pleaded for Mr. Palma to "give them some money!"), nor a website yet for us to see updated route info. We and other Off Road Vehicle users, clearly need the Utah BLM to institute a simple process for us to make such requests and get needed information to avoid conflicts and misunderstandings.

Please pass this message along to Director Palma and the RAC. I will be glad to discuss this concern with any of the BLM personnel in your State Office, as I did recently with Wendell in the Richfield Office.

Evan Day, Rock Hound Enthusiast,
ALAA Utah Director
XX
My advice for ALAA members is to attend as many RAC meetings in your State as you can. Let them know who you are (Juan Palma recognizes me as "that guy that likes rocks!"). Apply for a position on your RAC if it sounds interesting to you; it can have a big impact on our hobby. Issues like whether to "List" Sage Grouse as an endangered species, and route access for Vehicle Dependent activities like ours are not going away.

****UPDATE****

Recreational Rock collecting Washington State

By Andrew Johnson, ALAA
Central Washington Rep

Recently (7/17/2012) the Washington State Department of Fish & Wildlife Commission (WDFW) considered a petition brought before it by a number of stakeholders of Washington. The petition was seeking a rule change in the Washington Administrative Code (WAC) as well as a rule change to the WDFW regulations which would allow recreational rockhounding activities by permitting the collection of 250 pounds P/P per day in aggregate, and 25 lbs per day for petrified wood. It would have allowed for the use of hand tools only(no mechanized/motor powered machinery or explosives) as well as stating that no material collected was or will be intended for commercial use.

In making it's decision to deny this petition and subsequent rule changes the volunteer commission of nine wasted little time in deciding what to do, relying on department staff to suggest their action based upon a host of unfounded and unproven concerns and baseless innuendos that are contradictory at best.

The justification for the commissions actions are enumerated in the following 7 statements.

The proposed denial of this petition is based on several concerns described below including mineral right issues, compliance with land acquisition grant agreements, and resource and cultural resource damage.

1. The state of Washington does not own the mineral rights on the majority of WDFW public lands. Each deed would need to be reviewed to determine if WDFW owns the surface minerals. Further, it is very common for mineral rights reservations to reserve fossils. There is, therefore, a concern about the unpermitted removal of minerals, including fossils, where they may not be owned by the state.
2. Resource impacts from digging would be in conflict with limitations stipulated in acquisition grant agreements where lands are purchased to protect habitat. Allowance of such activity could be in conflict with the funding source(s) and thus would put us into grant conversion
3. Resource damage is also a significant concern. Digging on public lands could degrade fish and wildlife habitat. Talus slopes, cliffs, riparian habitats, and other areas are critical for priority fish and wildlife species.
4. To comply with federal and state laws, WDFW is required to do an evaluation before disturbing soils for activities such as digging post holes for fencing or even digging holes for planting trees. This site specific evaluation typically includes consultation with federal, state, and tribal entities Although allowing individuals to dig on state lands does not in and of itself threaten cultural resources, the likelihood of cultural resource damage is very real. Tribal concerns may exist because of the potential for the exposure and damage of cultural resources.
5. The removal of non-renewable resources such as petrified wood and other minerals like columnar basalt can diminish the recreational, educational, and research opportunities for others.
6. Other public land management agencies addressing this issue:
 - National Parks for the most part do not allow this activity.
 - Oregon Department of Fish and Wildlife requires a permit to remove minerals, but cultural resource protections require surveys and consultation with tribes, so permits for this activity would be very difficult to get.
 - Idaho Fish and Game does not allow removal of soils, gravel, or minerals.
 - California Fish and Game does not allow the removal of any humans, soil, sand gravel or rock on state wildlife areas.

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Recreational Rock collecting

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7. Inability to enforce rock collection activities as it's nowhere to be found on their priority list.

Of all the above reasons stated for the denial, the one most amusing was #7. They have always and will continue to exercise their inability to enforce rock collecting activities as it's nowhere to be found on their priority list.

Currently rules and regulations governing casual rock collecting are as follows.

WAC 232-12-251 (Washington Administrative Code) Removal of minerals, wood and artifacts from department lands. It is unlawful to remove petrified wood, minerals, fossils, wood products or artifacts from department lands unless such removal is authorized by a permit issued by the director.

RCW 79.02.310 (Revised Code of Washington) Trespasser guilty of theft, when. Every person who willfully commits any trespass upon any public lands of the state and cuts down, destroys, or injures any timber, or any tree, including a Christmas tree as defined in [*RCW 76.48.020](#), standing or growing thereon, or takes, or removes, or causes to be taken, or removed, therefrom any wood or timber lying thereon, or maliciously injures or severs anything attached thereto, or the produce thereof, or digs, quarries, mines, takes or removes therefrom any earth, soil, stone, mineral, clay, sand, gravel, or any valuable materials, is guilty of theft under chapter [9A.56](#) RCW.

RCW 79.10.125 (Revised Code of Washington) Land open to public for fishing, hunting, and nonconsumptive wildlife activities. All state lands hereafter leased for grazing or agricultural purposes shall be open and available to the public for purposes of hunting and fishing, and

for nonconsumptive wildlife activities, as defined by the board of natural resources, unless closed to public entry because of fire hazard or unless the department gives prior written approval and the area is lawfully posted by lessee to prohibit hunting and fishing, and nonconsumptive wildlife activities, thereon in order to prevent damage to crops or other land cover, to improvements on the land, to livestock, to the lessee, or to the general public, or closure is necessary to avoid undue interference with carrying forward a departmental or agency program. In the event any such lands are so posted it shall be unlawful for any person to hunt or fish, or pursue nonconsumptive wildlife activities, on any such posted lands. Such lands shall not be open and available for wildlife activities when access could endanger crops on the land or when access could endanger the person accessing the land. The department shall insert the provisions of this section in all new grazing and agricultural leases.

BIG CHANGES!

By John Martin

In the wake of the ruling by the 9th Circuit Court of Appeals that the Forest Service (and BLM and Bureau of Reclamation) may not charge Standard Amenity Fees to visitors who simply park and go hiking or who camp in undeveloped areas, you *should* see some changes as you visit your favorite recreation areas this summer.

However the agencies are largely stalling or in denial so it's important that you know your rights. Don't be bullied into paying fees you do not owe.

Read this newsletter; read the law; read the court ruling. Next time you venture out onto federal public lands, go armed with the knowledge of what the limitations are on where and when you must pay a fee!

ARRA E-Mail Alert

Americans for Responsible Recreation Access
http://www.arra-access.com

Final Plan for Marine Corps Combat Center in San Bernardino County, CA Substantially Affects OHV Use]

July 27, 2012 □ The Department of the Navy has published a Final Environmental Impact Statement (FEIS) to evaluate the potential environmental impacts associated with the proposed establishment of a large-scale training range facility at the Marine Corps Air Ground Combat Center at Twentynine Palms, San Bernardino County, California. The remaining step in the planning process is to issue a Record of Decision (ROD) following a 30-day waiting period beginning today. Following publication of the ROD, the EIS will be submitted to the Department of Interior and then to Congress.

Under the preferred alternative in the FEIS, the Johnson Valley OHV Area (JVOA) would be substantially affected. The 189,470-acre JVOA is currently managed by BLM as the largest area in the U.S. open to cross-country OHV use. The preferred alternative would close approximately 56% of the JVOA for the Combat Center's use. The remaining 44% of the JVOA would be open to OHV use 10 months per year in the Restricted Public Access Area (RPAA) (southern portion of JVOA) or year-round in areas outside of the RPAA (western portion of JVOA). This plan is essentially the same as the plan that was included in the Draft EIS, which was released in February 2011.

Comments on the FEIS must be received by **August 27, 2012**. Comments may be submitted by following the link below.

[Submit Comments or View Full Text of FEIS and Maps](http://www.arra-access.com/site/R?i=FFq-9FifsAUf8sa1kB97Eg) (http://www.arra-access.com/site/R?i=FFq-9FifsAUf8sa1kB97Eg)

For further information, please contact Mr. Chris Proudfoot; Proposed 29 Palms Land Acquisition/Airspace Establishment Project, MAGTFTC, MCAGCC, Bldg. 1554, Box 788104 Twentynine Palms, CA 92278-8104; (760) 830-3764.

Note:

Work on the Congressional level is also ongoing to facilitate a more equitable solution between the Marine Corps and the OHV community. An amendment offered by U.S. Rep. Roscoe Bartlett (R-MD) that would require a report on the proposal was incorporated into H.R. 4310, the National Defense Authorization Act for Fiscal Year 2013. H.R. 4310 is pending in the Senate Arms Services Committee. The amendment provides that the Secretary of the Navy may not use funds for the training range facility until the Secretary of the Navy has provided the Congressional defense committees a report on the Marine Corps efforts. The report would identify the impact on OHV use in the JVOA as well the potential to use the same land without closure, but under specific permits for use.

Submitted by M Tetreault

ALL, this is serious, please contact all your club members, and those clubs near you. The marines, bless them, are going to take a huge chunk of California Desert, it will NEVER be returned. You must make your voices heard. Please act. Otherwise this desert area is gone.

Shirley Leeson, ALAA

Sacrificing the Desert For What?

By Brad Mitzelfelt, San Bernardino County
Board of Supervisors
Via CORVA Website

Solar energy development in California is largely driven by state mandates that now have utilities increasing their use of expensive renewable energy. It is a dubious legacy of a state government that cannot maintain its highways or keep felons in prison but can arrogantly assign itself the responsibility of curing “climate change” by destroying its citizens' economy.

The tools to fast-track this renewable energy development include preferential regulatory treatment by federal and state agencies along with government “stimulus” incentives, tax breaks and loan-guarantee subsidies. The costs of all of this will be fully realized when the electric bills come due in the near future. That indicates that this is hardly being driven by economics, but rather by politics. And the politics of saving the planet derive from the same movement that ostensibly tries to protect the environment from the impacts of development. However, this new, well-connected renewable energy development sector – in the form of unionized large-scale solar energy generation projects on California's federal desert lands – has elbowed its way ahead of all other types of development, including mining, which actually produces things people need.

This is one of several attempts to grab more desert away from average Californians. The U.S. Marine Corps is proposing to take over a majority of the Johnson Valley Off-Highway Vehicle recreation area to add to its sprawling Twentynine Palms training base. Eight-hundred-thousand people a year visit Johnson Valley – as many as 40,000 in a single weekend.

As a former Marine who served in a desert war, I certainly want the Marines to have the land they need to realistically train.

But I also believe that if they don't have enough room on their current base, they could

simply apply for BLM permits for periodic training exercises on the nearby lands as is done in other parts of the country with no problems.

At the same time, Senator Dianne Feinstein is proposing a second so-called “Desert Protection Act” that would take 1.6 million additional acres of BLM land out of potential development, including mining exploration, by designating two new “National Monuments”, one adjacent to the Mojave National Preserve (which was created by the 1994 Act, taking 1.5 million acres out of BLM multiple use in addition to 800,000 acres out of private ownership), and one adjacent to the Joshua Tree National Park.

These proposals sound harmless, but what most people don't realize is that just about every square inch of the desert is spoken for, either for military use, national parks, wilderness and special conservation areas, Indian reservations, or other types of land management. Half of the lands under BLM management, the supposed “multiple use” agency, are protected under wilderness or special conservation area restrictions.

Projects that would disturb or destroy habitat, say, of the desert tortoise, must make up for that loss by purchasing private habitat at ratios of usually at least three acres for every one acre disturbed. At that rate, even in San Bernardino, the nation's largest county, just three solar projects on federal land will require an unacceptable amount of private land acquisition - 22,000 acres, or roughly 34 square miles. And that land will come off of the county's tax rolls. We will literally run out of mitigation land after a handful of projects.

The federal Energy Policy Act of 2005 requires that 10,000 megawatts of renewable energy be generated on public lands in the west. To meet California's mandate of having 33 percent of its energy come from “renewable” sources, it requires more than 20,000 megawatts of production and they are looking mainly to public lands. If we

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Sacrificing the Desert For What?

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approved that much solar, the result would be a regulatory lockdown on the rest of the desert by the federal Fish and Wildlife Service and the state Department of Fish and Game. And we still wouldn't be making a dent in the problem these projects purport to solve. California has the ninth largest economy in the world (and falling) but we generate less than 1.5 percent of the world's so-called greenhouse gases. If we slash emissions by half, we've reduced global emissions by a scant three-quarters of a percentage point.

I do support accommodating our fair share of renewable energy as part of a portfolio of economic land uses. More than \$5 billion is currently being spent in San Bernardino County on projects and there is some economic benefit there. That benefit would increase if we were to direct those projects to private lands, where they can have more positive economic benefits and less environmental impact.

For projects on public land, we must stop the unsustainable private-land acquisition requirements in favor of scientifically supportable efforts to effectively recover species on existing federal land. Head-starting (raising juvenile tortoises until their shells can withstand predator attacks), which is successfully used by the military, should be allowed for other types of land management. Aggressive predator control to protect tortoises from ravens and coyotes would also be more effective than simply putting land off limits. They have been doing that for 20 years and the tortoise is still going extinct.

These public lands have long supported a range of beneficial uses. Let's not destroy the desert, or our ability to use and enjoy it, in the name of saving the planet. All we will get in return is a world and a way of life less worth saving.

Via the ALAA Webpage

The Future and Availability of Rockhounding in Oregon

by Gary Buss

Over the past number of years all of us have watched more and more of our natural resources disappear and areas we have taken for granted as always being there, going away. As an example, a number of years ago in Crook County, the Prineville Chamber of Commerce maintained some 15-20 claims that were open to rockhounds most of the year and were opened up prior to the Prineville Rockhound Pow Wow once a year. As liability insurance climbed in price and some other resources were absorbed into wilderness areas, more and more of these memories have been lost.

Over the past year, members of the Prineville Rockhound Pow Wow have elected to be a little more pro-active to assure everyone that some sites will be held and maintained for the future. This was done in two ways. Looking into some old dig sites, we have chosen to put claims on two sites that have been real producers for material over the years. One site was the tube agate bed on the south side of the Ochoco and the other was the outright purchase of the White Fir Egg site "the agate egg site". A field trip this year during the Pow Wow was very productive. It came with the joint effort of the Forest Service and the rockhound community working together. We will have a great deal of restoration to do on both sites, and with the joint effort with the Forest Service, it can be a win, win for them and for us all.

Just a word about both sites, the tube agate is closed to digging because a rare plant and bulb exist there. However, it will change as soon as they do their environmental impact study and they will find an area we can work above the meadow. The White Fir agate area will be under constant restoration with the cooperation of the Forest Service and we will keep all informed as

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that progresses. Both sites are under claim by the Prineville Rockhound Pow Wow.

Secondly, and this is where all of you come in—we are looking at an opportunity that has been around for a while, but most of us have never looked at it as an option. There are many old sites that have been worked over the years and just sit there. The Forest Service has a plan called “adoption”. The Forest Service has neither the man power nor the money to restore these old digs and are looking to partner with groups that care about restoring and maintaining some of these areas. This is not a “name it and claim it” game for these areas, it is a joint venture with the Forest Service and BLM to keep these areas open to the future of rockhounds. They do care about the future of rock hounding in Oregon. How would it look? It can be as simple as a rock club that has a once a year field trip to a site they choose to adopt and have its own field day. Half the group digs and produces material, while the others refill old dig sites and sack trash. After a few hours your people shift roles. In the mean time, maybe the barbeque is smelling pretty good for all at the end of the day. Adoption means that you as a club don’t have to jump through all the hoops and rules and regulations of going the claim route—yet you maintain the site for your organization. There will always be old sites for you to look at and see if there is value for the future, or new areas that you would like to see as a future opportunity for your club. I believe that adoption is the easiest and quickest way to maintain our past and to become a part of our future. It is a unique way for your club to look at the future and what you want to be a part of.

How do we start? If you have some area you have identified as a local club that you would like to preserve for the future, I suggest a set down visit with your BLM or Forest Service geologist and begin a cooperative effort to hold these dig sites for the future. I know we have built a very good relationship with the Crook County office and will continue to look for more opportunities to save lands and dig sites for all our future. Personally, I believe this is a very

good start and a very different way to look at how we maintain our past and future in this hobby. Your children and theirs will be the beneficiary of what we do now. I believe it should be looked at very closely by all of us. It is there for all of us—right now.

Editor’s Note: Gary Buss is Field Trip Chairperson of the Prineville Rockhound Pow Wow, which is affiliated with the All Rockhounds Pow-Wow Club of America, Inc.

For more information about these organizations, see <http://prinevillerockhoundpowwow.com/>, and <http://www.allrockhoundspowwowclubofamerica.com/>.

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Submitted by:

Theresa Byrne, Editor

Rockhound Rumbblings

Willamette Agate and Mineral Society

Salem OR

Just FYI...

There have been several reported deaths from a virus at Yosemite National Park that our government has not been able to get under control and the park is still open and people are flocking to the park to be exposed to this environmental hazard.

At the same time there have not been any reported injuries or deaths in the Clear Creek Management Area from asbestos exposure. The CCMA has been closed to human usage since 2008 and the BLM has just released an order to keep parts of the area closed to human entrance for another 20 years.

Do you think the EPA, BLM, USFS and our Government Elected officials have their priorities reversed? What say YOU!

John Martin

Rockhound Activist

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