

Interior and Agriculture have developed the National Fire Plan, which, among other things, calls for a substantial increase in the number of forested acres treated annually to reduce hazardous fuels. As part of this effort, agencies must consult with the Services, in accordance with section 7 of the Act and comply with other applicable requirements of various environmental laws and regulations.

Under section 7(a)(2) of the Act, each Federal agency must, in consultation with the Services, ensure that any action it funds, authorizes, or carries out is not likely to jeopardize the continued existence of any endangered or threatened species or adversely modify designated critical habitat. Therefore, Federal land management agencies must complete section 7 consultation in accordance with procedures identified at 50 CFR part 402 before implementing any project to reduce hazardous fuels. It is essential that these consultations be carried out as quickly and efficiently as possible to promote the timely implementation of preventative actions that will help to ensure public safety.

Preventative actions that will help ensure public safety are among the goals of the President's recently announced Healthy Forest Initiative, which will implement core components of the National Fire Plan. As part of the Healthy Forest Initiative, the Services have developed a guidance document to ensure consistency in the approach the Services use to analyze the risks and benefits of implementing actions to reduce hazardous fuels during the section 7 consultation process.

Some projects may have short-term adverse effects on some endangered and threatened listed species; however, at the same time, these projects present opportunities for significant long-term benefits to those species and their habitats. The guidance document encourages the Services to evaluate and balance the long-term benefits of fuels reduction projects, including the benefits of restoring the natural fire regimes and native vegetation, as well as the long-term risks of catastrophic wildfire, against any short- or long-term adverse effects.

All procedures identified in the guidance document are consistent with the requirements of section 7(a)(2) of the Act and its implementing regulations (50 CFR part 402).

The Services are publishing this notice in order to advise other agencies and the public of the availability of the guidance document and to encourage its use.

Authority: The authority for this action is the Endangered Species Act, as amended (16 U.S.C. 1531 *et seq.*).

Dated: December 20, 2002.

William T. Hogarth,

*Assistant Administrator for Fisheries,
National Marine Fisheries Service.*

Dated: December 27, 2002.

Steve Williams,

Director, Fish and Wildlife Service.

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DEPARTMENT OF THE INTERIOR

Bureau of Land Management

**[AZ-070-033-1232-EA, SRP-070-03-01
and SRP-070-03-02]**

Notice of Temporary Closure of Selected Public Lands in La Paz County, Arizona, During the Operation of the 2003 Parker 250 and Parker 425 Desert Races

AGENCY: Bureau of Land Management.

ACTION: Temporary Closure of Selected Public Lands in La Paz County, Arizona, during the operation of the 2003 Parker 250 and Parker 425 Desert Races.

SUMMARY: The Bureau of Land Management (BLM) Lake Havasu Field Office announces the temporary closure of selected public lands under its administration in La Paz County, Arizona. This action is being taken to help ensure public safety and prevent unnecessary environmental degradation during the officially permitted running of the 2003 Parker 250 and Parker 425 Desert Races. This closure is effective during the Parker 250 Race from 6 p.m. MST on January 3, 2003 and ending at 8 p.m. MST on January 5, 2003; in addition, the closure is effective for the Parker 425 Race, beginning at 10 a.m. (MST) February 6, 2003 and ending at midnight (MST) on February 8, 2003.

All public lands, including county maintained roads and highways located on public lands, that are located within two miles of the designated racecourse are subject to this temporary closure. Official maps maintained by the BLM's Lake Havasu Field Office define the designated racecourse.

The following acts are prohibited during the temporary closure:

1. Driving or being present on designated racecourse. This restriction does not apply to race participants, race officials and emergency vehicles.
2. Vehicle parking or stopping in areas affected by the closure, except where such is specifically allowed (designated spectator areas).

3. Camping in any area, except in the designated spectator areas.

4. Discharge of firearms.

5. Possession or use of any fireworks.

6. Cutting or collecting firewood of any kind, including dead and down wood or other vegetative material.

7. Operating any vehicle (except for registered race vehicles), including off-highway vehicles, which is not registered and equipped for street and highway operation.

8. Operating any vehicle in the area of the closure at a speed of more than 35 mph. This does not apply to registered race vehicles during the race, while on the designated racecourse.

9. Parking any vehicle in violation of posted restrictions.

10. Parking any vehicle in a manner that obstructs or impedes normal traffic movement.

11. Driving any vehicle around or past any "road closed" sign or traffic control barrier.

12. Failing to obey any person authorized to direct traffic, including law enforcement officers and designated race officials.

13. Failing to observe Spectator Area quiet hours of 10 PM to 6 AM.

14. Failing to keep campsite or race viewing site free of trash and litter.

15. Allowing any pet or other animal to be unrestrained by a leash of not more than 6 feet in length.

The above restrictions do not apply to emergency vehicles and vehicles owned by the United States, the State of Arizona, or La Paz County. Authority for closure of public lands is found in 43 CFR 8340, subpart 8341; 43 CFR 8360, subpart 8364.1; and 43 CFR 2930. Persons who violate this closure order are subject to arrest and, upon conviction, may be fined not more than \$100,000 and/or imprisoned for not more than 12 months (18 U.S.C. 3571(b)(5)).

FOR FURTHER INFORMATION CONTACT:

Bryan Pittman, District Law Enforcement Ranger, BLM Lake Havasu Field Office, 2610 Sweetwater Avenue, Lake Havasu City, Arizona 86406, (928) 505-1200.

SUPPLEMENTARY INFORMATION: The racecourse is as described in general terms as follows: Beginning at the eastern boundary of the Colorado River Indian Tribe Reservation in Osborne Wash, it runs east along Shea Road, then east along the Parker-Swansea Road to the Central Arizona Project Canal, then north along the CAP Canal, to and along the maintained county road that runs from the east end of Shea Road to Mineral Wash, then southeast along the maintained county road that runs to

Midway, then east along the Transmission Pass Road through State Trust lands located in Butler Valley. The route re-enters public lands for a short distance west of Alamo Lake Road, then re-enters State Trust Lands in Butler Valley, then onto public lands again on the Butler Valley Road northwest of Graham Well and proceeds west to the "Bouse Y", which is located north of Bouse, Arizona. The route then proceeds north along the Bouse-Midway Road to Midway. From Midway, it proceeds west along the north boundary of the East Cactus Plain Wilderness Area to the Parker-Swansea Road. It then proceeds west on the Parker-Swansea Road to the CAP Canal, along the north boundary of the Cactus Plain Wilderness Study Area to Osborne, Wash. From there it proceeds west along the Osborne, Wash to the CRIT Reservation boundary.

Dated: October 25, 2002.

Donald Ellsworth,

Field Manager, Lake Havasu Field Office.

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DEPARTMENT OF THE INTERIOR

Bureau of Land Management

[WY-090-1220-AA]

Notice of Seasonal Closure of Public Lands to Motorized Vehicle Use

AGENCY: Bureau of Land Management, Interior.

ACTION: Notice of seasonal closure of certain public lands located in Lincoln County, Wyoming, to all types of motor vehicle use.

SUMMARY: The Record of Decision (ROD) and approved Kemmerer Resource Management Plan (RMP) ROD, dated April 29, 1986, states that big game winter ranges may be closed to minimize stress to wintering animals.

After consulting with the Wyoming Game and Fish Department, all Bureau of Land Management (BLM)-administered public land surface, including existing roads and two-tracks, are closed in the Raymond Mountain Wilderness Study Area (WSA), Slate Creek, Rock Creek, and Bridger Creek winter ranges to all types of motorized vehicle travel (e.g., snowmobiles, all-terrain vehicles, pickups, motorcycles, sport utility vehicles, etc.) from January 1, 2003, until April 30, 2003. Use of these areas by nonmotorized means is still allowed. This action is necessary for the protection of crucial winter range habitat for elk, moose, antelope, and

mule deer. No motorized vehicle travel into these areas will be allowed unless specifically authorized (in writing) by the authorized officer (BLM Kemmerer Field Manager), except for highways or county roads. Personnel of the Wyoming Game and Fish Department, Department of Agriculture, APHIS, Wildlife Services, Lincoln and Uinta County Sheriff's Offices, and the BLM are exempt from this closure when performing official duties. Operators of existing oil and gas facilities may perform maintenance and pumping, as approved, and livestock operators may perform permitted activities. After April 30, motorized vehicle access is limited to existing roads and two-tracks, as described in the Kemmerer RMP ROD dated April 29, 1986.

SUPPLEMENTARY INFORMATION: The BLM Kemmerer Field Office is responsible for management of crucial winter range habitat located on public lands within Lincoln County. These crucial wildlife winter range habitat areas and the management thereof, are addressed in the Kemmerer RMP. The RMP states that seasonal closures for motorized vehicles may be used to protect big game winter range. Closures will vary depending on conditions and are implemented in coordination with the Wyoming Game and Fish Department (Kemmerer RMP, page 25 and 27). The Raymond Mountain WSA, Slate Creek, Rock Creek, and Bridger Creek areas are crucial wintering ranges for elk, moose, antelope, and mule deer. This seasonal closure is necessary to protect wintering deer, moose, and elk, which are suffering from the effects of a 3-year drought. Low forage production associated with the drought has caused animals to go into winter in very poor condition. Additionally, forage production on winter ranges is also reduced. These impacts to wintering wildlife are currently compounded by significant human activity, such as day and night wildlife observation, photo/videography, snowmobiling, and antler gathering. The use of motorized vehicles during difficult winter periods can increase the number of animals that will die on the winter range and can decrease production of young during the following summer. Therefore, a seasonal closure is necessary to relieve impacts from the use of motorized vehicles on wintering big game animals.

The following BLM-administered lands are included in this closure: The Raymond Mountain WSA is located approximately 15 miles north of Cokeville and contains 32,956 acres. The Slate Creek area includes all BLM-administered lands south of Fontenelle

Creek, west and north of Route 189, and east of the crest of Slate Creek Ridge, and contains 111,100 acres. The Rock Creek area includes all BLM-administered lands south of County Road 204 (Pine Creek Road), west of the crest of Dempsey Ridge, west of Fossil Butte National Monument, north and east of Highway 30, and contains 105,750 acres. The Bridger Creek area includes all BLM-administered lands south of Highway 30, west of Fossil Ridge, west of Bear River Divide, north of the Uinta—Lincoln County line, east of the Utah—Wyoming border, and southeast of Highway 89, and contains 98,400 acres.

Maps of these seasonal closure areas will be posted with this notice at key locations that provide access into the closure areas, as well as at the Kemmerer Field Office, 312 Highway 189 North, Kemmerer, Wyoming 83101-9710.

Authority for closure orders is provided in regulation 43 CFR, subparts 8341.2 and 8364.1. Violations of this closure are punishable by a fine not to exceed \$1000.00, and/or imprisonment not to exceed 12 months.

DATES: This seasonal closure will be effective from January 1, 2003, until April 30, 2003.

FOR FURTHER INFORMATION CONTACT: Wally Mierzejewski, Outdoor Recreation Planner, or Jim Wright, Wildlife Biologist, Bureau of Land Management, 312 Highway 189 North, Kemmerer, Wyoming 83101, or contact by telephone at 307-828-4500.

Dated: October 10, 2002.

Alan L. Kesterke,

Acting State Director.

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DEPARTMENT OF THE INTERIOR

Bureau of Land Management

[OR-054-1220-AA; GP-03-0019]

Notice of Closure; Notice of Permanent Motor Vehicle Restriction on Public Lands; Deschutes/Crook County, OR

AGENCY: Bureau of Land Management, Prineville District, Deschutes Resource Area/Field Office.

ACTION: Notice is hereby given that off-highway vehicle (OHV) travel within the Millican Valley OHV Trail System is restricted to designated routes only. The Millican Valley OHV Trail System is located approximately 20 miles East of Bend, Oregon in Crook and Deschutes Counties. Specifically, this closure order