



**NATIONAL  
CONSERVATION  
LANDS**

# Mojave Trails National Monument

Envisioning Report

May 2017







# **Bureau of Land Management Mojave Trails National Monument 2016 Envisioning Sessions**

## **Summary Report**

### **Introduction:**

Three public Envisioning Sessions were hosted by the Bureau of Land Management (BLM) in August and September of 2016 in Barstow, Yucca Valley, and Needles, CA. These communities are all adjacent to the newly designated Mojave Trails National Monument (MTNM). These sessions were held in an effort to involve the public as early as possible, and to identify relevant public views and values about the MTNM before beginning the planning process. Each session focused on providing basic information about the newly designated monument and requesting information from session participants. Press releases and fliers were used to promote the sessions to the public.

Sessions were held from 5:00 pm. to 7:30 pm. at the following locations and dates:

- August 30<sup>th</sup> at the Hampton Inn, 2710 Lenwood Road, Barstow, CA 92311
- August 31<sup>st</sup> at the Yucca Valley Community Center, 57090 29 Palms Highway, Yucca Valley, CA 92284
- September 1<sup>st</sup> at El Garces Train Depot, 950 Front Street, Needles, CA 92363

Staff from the BLM California Desert District Office, Barstow Field Office, and Needles Field Office attended each session to answer questions and talk with the public. Information displayed for the public included the Presidential Proclamation that established MTNM, Message Boards, and Maps. This information was intended to provide a basis for community discussions.

Session activities focused on gathering information about what the public values most about the monument and identifying what types of experiences they want to have within it. Information was collected using sign-in sheets and hand written questionnaires. Public responses to the questionnaire were reviewed by BLM staff

and the information was sorted into general categories based on the types of answers that were given. The results of this information gathering effort are included in this report. This information will be incorporated into a Planning Assessment that will set the stage for the planning process. Additional opportunities for public engagement will occur throughout the planning process.

## **Background:**

On February 12, 2016, President Obama signed a proclamation creating the Mojave Trails National Monument under the management of the BLM. The monument encompasses 1.6 million acres including more than 350,000 acres of previously designated Wilderness. The monument is comprised of a stunning mosaic of rugged mountain ranges, ancient lava flows, and spectacular sand dunes. The monument protects irreplaceable historic resources including ancient Native American trading routes, World War II-era training camps, and the longest remaining undeveloped stretch of Route 66. Additionally, the area has been a focus of study and research for decades, including geological research and ecological studies on the effects of climate change and land management practices on ecological communities and wildlife. The monument primarily falls within the boundaries of the Needles Field Office but it also stretches into the Barstow and Palm Springs Offices as well.

## **Format of Envisioning Sessions:**

The room layout for each session was very similar. The public entered the room through a main entrance and was greeted by a BLM staff member at a sign-in table. They were asked to provide their name, address, and email so that BLM could reach out to them with information on future planning events.

After the sign-in area, the public was then given an opportunity to view the President's Proclamation, which established the monument. It was presented on a message board near the sign-in table. The center of the room had public work tables where the public could socialize, review information, and fill in the questionnaire.

Message boards were stationed around the perimeter of the room and provided the public with information related to the main themes of the future planning effort. These themes included: Planning Area, Education/Research, Visual Resources, Spiritual Values, Recreation/Tourism, Natural and Biological Resources, Wilderness, Cultural Resources, and Route 66. Each of these stations included both informational boards

as well as area maps specific to the station's theme. BLM staff members were present at each station to provide information and answer questions from the public.

The goals for the envisioning sessions were as follows:

- Foster productive relationships between the public and the BLM
- Communicate what is contained within the Presidential Proclamation for the monument
- Identify resource values and public expectations going into the planning process
- Identify interested parties and potential opportunities for collaboration

### **Envisioning Questionnaire:**

Each member of the public who visited the Envisioning Sessions received a questionnaire form. The format of the form was short answer. The questions were categorized into Introductory and Preliminary Planning sections.

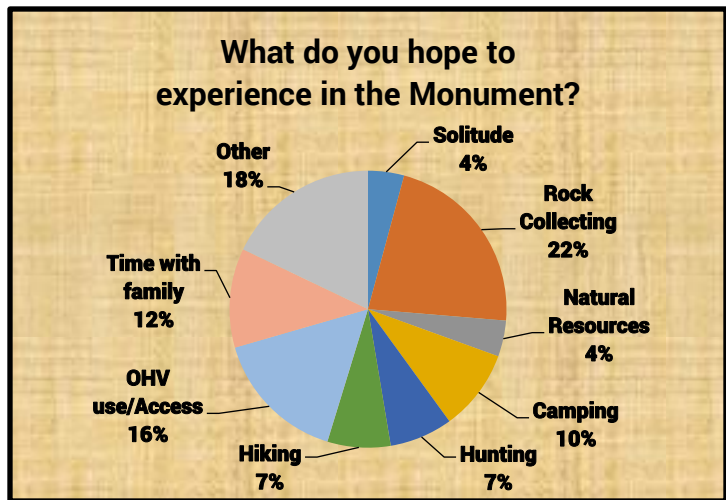
The Introductory section aimed at identifying overall feelings and general interests about the monument. The Preliminary Planning section was more specific and asked for input regarding: Vegetation Resources, Wildlife and Species Status Species, Cultural Resources, Paleontological Resources, Visual Resources, Acquisitions, Recreation, Travel Management, and Economic Uses.

Respondents were also asked to provide any data, photographs, maps, etc. that they would want BLM to consider during the planning process, and to identify any groups they felt the questionnaire should be sent to as well as any additional issues that they wanted addressed in the planning process.

In total, 85 members of the public responded to the information presented at the Envisioning Sessions. These responses included 77 questionnaire forms, 1 fax, 5 emails, and 2 letters. This report summarizes the responses that the BLM has received to date.

### **Introductory Questions**

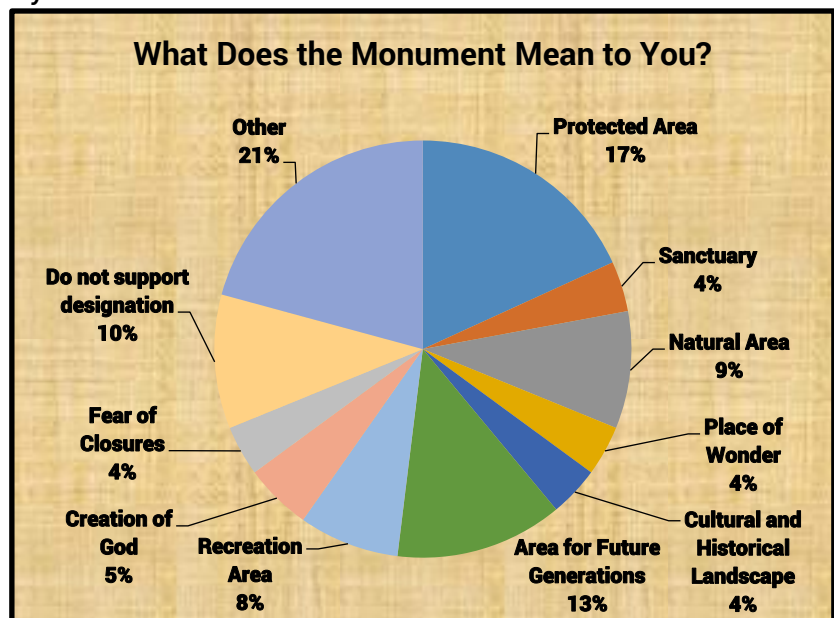
The questionnaire began with a few introductory questions designed to identify overall feelings toward the monument. The public was asked “What does the Monument mean to you?”, and “What do you hope to experience in the Monument?” followed by a second set of questions, “Are there places in the Monument that are special to you?” and “Where are they and what makes them special for you?”



When asked “What does the monument mean to you”, the majority of the comments identified it as a Protected Area and an Area for Future Generations. However, 10% of the public’s comments indicated through various answers that they did not agree with the monument’s designation. Overall, 77 comments were received on this question. In addition to those answers shown on the chart, other answers included: Preservation of Route 66, Small Town Development, Almost a National Park, Escape from Cities, Exploration, Geology, Educational Opportunities, Tourism, No Solar or Wind Development, and Connection to the Desert.

In tandem with the first question, the public was asked “What do you hope to experience in the Monument?” This received 95 comments. The majority of the respondents indicated that they would like to continue traditions such as Rock Collecting and Off-Highway Vehicle (OHV) Use.

Intertwined with the answers from the first two questions was the overall theme of keeping access open throughout the monument, especially for the elderly and disabled persons. Other answers, which were given to a lesser extent, included: Scenic Areas, Picnicking, Route 66, Wildlife, Prospecting, New



Experiences, Fishing, Photography Opportunities, Spiritual Experience, and Historical Areas.

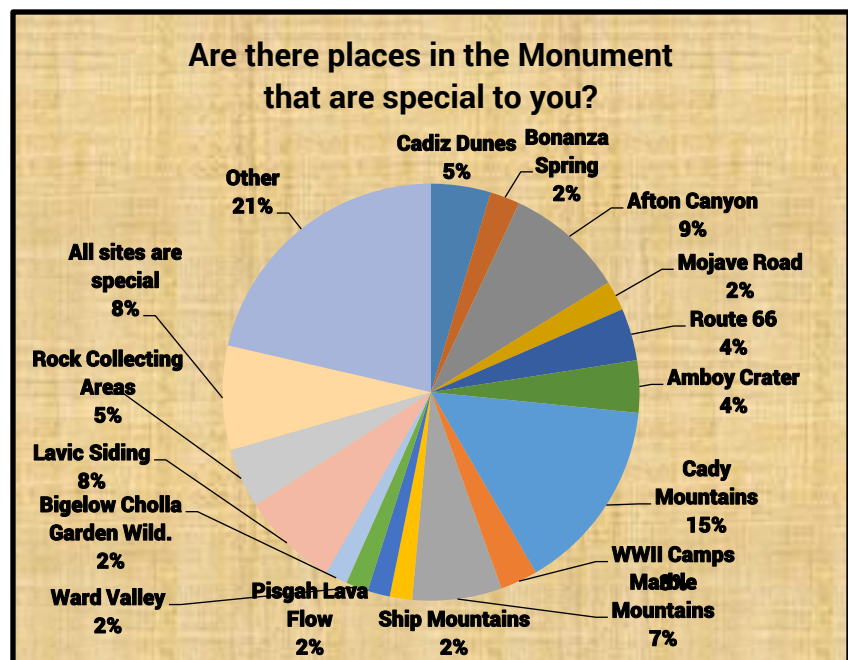
The last set of questions in the introductory section asked the public to 1) Identify places that they find special in the monument, and 2) Tell why these places have significance. Cady Mountains, Lavic Siding, and Rock Collecting areas in general accounted for 28% of the responses. After that, Afton Canyon was identified for its scenic and natural qualities. The fossil collecting area, Marble Mountains, was the next most common special area. In all, 36 comments were received.

The following locations fell into the “Other” category shown on the graph: Cadiz Valley, Sheephole Pass, Bristol Lake, Danby Lake, Ludlow, Baxter Wash, Cultural Sites, Scenic Areas, Geological Sites, Open Spaces, Iron Mountains, Granite Mountains, Flattop Mountain, T&T Railroad, Chambless, Mole Canyon, Sacramento Mountains, Broadwell Lakebed, Chemehuevi Valley, Mining Districts, Desert Tortoise Habitat, Bat Habitat, OHV Routes, and Wilderness. One individual mentioned a memorial site for their pet and another indicated that they still needed to explore the monument.

**Preliminary Planning  
Topic Questions**

This section started off by asking the public four general questions as they relate to Vegetation Resources of Special Importance and Wildlife and Special Status Species of Special Importance. These questions were:

- What topics would you like to see addressed in the plan?
- What aspects of the National Monument would you like to see kept as is?
- What actions do you consider necessary to protect and/or restore the historical and cultural significance of these lands?



- What actions do you consider necessary to protect and/or restore the natural resources and scientific values of these lands?

### **Vegetation Resources of Special Importance**

The public identified several vegetation resources as being significant. These included: Teddy Bear Cholla, White-Margined Beardtongue, Crucifixion Thorn, Piute Spot Flower, Smoke Trees, Joshua Trees, T&E species, and Wildflowers. Overall, 28% of the public who commented indicated that all resources in the monument are of special importance. Conversely, 12% indicated that none of the resources met that threshold. Of these, many stated that the vegetation has already adapted throughout the years and that no special management is necessary.

### **Wildlife and Special Status Species of Special Importance**

In this category, the public specifically identified the following species as having importance: Bighorn Sheep, Desert Tortoise, Mojave fringe-toed lizard, Least bells vireo, Western Pond Turtle, Golden Eagle, Pallid Bat, Townsend's big-eared bat, Bobcat, Burros, Deer, Burrowing Owl, Fox, Opossum, Coyote, Crow, and Hawk. In addition, Threatened and Endangered Species, Fish, Rodents, Birds, and Insects were generally named.

Overall, 24% of those who commented indicated that All Species/Wildlife in the monument are of special importance. Bighorn Sheep received 17% of the comments and Desert Tortoise followed with 14%. Mojave fringe-toed lizard received 6% and all other species were commented on 3% or less of the time.

Many stressed that BLM should coordinate wildlife management with the California Department of Fish and Wildlife (CDFW) and make any management decisions based on science and not "opinion." The comments also indicated that the public is concerned about BLM "making rules for the sake of making rules" and not based on "legitimate areas of concern."

### **What topics would you like to see addressed in the plan?**

This question was intended to pertain to Vegetation and Wildlife Resources only, however many of the comments referenced topics outside of this spectrum. Overall, 91 comments were received.

One of the main concerns the public has is continued access within the monument. This mainly refers to OHV access. About 20% of the comments received on this question indicated that the public wants BLM to address keeping OHV access open in



the monument's plan. Rock collecting was the second most common response on this topic. Combined, these two issues account for almost one-third of the overall responses to this question.

Additionally, 8% of the comments talked about the need for the monument to have facilities including visitor/interpretive centers and restrooms with water. No specific locations were mentioned for a visitor center. There was one comment advising that the BLM consider the development of a Central Commercial Zone within the monument to promote business development and tourism.

Hunting, Wildlife Water Development, and Judicious Spending of Funds each received 5% of the comments. Generally, the same respondents talked about all three of these categories. The comments suggested that BLM should continue to defer management of hunting and the water developments to CDFW and spend its scarce funding on other needs. Four of the comments suggested that BLM should not receive any additional funding for the monument and two comments took the opposite position and asked that the plan discuss strategies on how the monument can receive additional funding.

Law Enforcement/Resource Protection was also mentioned in 5% of the comments. These comments suggested that added enforcement was needed to address protection concerns.

Additional topics which were discussed in less than 5% of the comments included: Creation of a Monument Advisory Committee, Prohibition of Groundwater Removal from Cadiz, Tribal Consultation, Partnerships, Multi-Use, WWII Training Camps, Stewardship, Signage, Cell Phone Coverage, Education/Outreach, Managing for Climate Change, Recreation, Wilderness/No New Designations, OHV Open Areas, and Trash Abatement.

### **What aspects of the National Monument would you like to see kept as is?**

Respondents overwhelmingly indicated they would like to see OHV access for rock collecting and other recreational opportunities remain open. Access for recreation related activities accounted for about 72% of the 85 total comments on this question. Another 14% of the comments suggested that all of the monument should stay the same. Additionally, 7% of the comments asked that the Wildlife Water Developments be kept the same if not improved upon. Several respondents indicated that limiting access will create mistrust from the public.

**What actions do you consider necessary to protect and/or restore the historical and cultural significance of these lands?**

A quarter of the 27 comments received indicated that all necessary actions should be taken to protect or restore the historical and cultural significance of these lands. In order to accomplish this, the public suggests utilizing education/outreach, law enforcement/prosecutions, monitoring, and restricting access to historic and cultural sites.

Other comments suggested that no additional actions should be taken by the BLM in regards to these resources. About 11% of the comments indicated that the monument should not create any new regulations or restrictions and that access to the sites should remain open.

**What actions do you consider necessary to protect and/or restore the natural resources and scientific values of these lands?**

This question received 76 comments. 9% of respondents indicated that all necessary actions should be taken to protect the natural resources within the monument.

Respondents indicated that maintaining vehicle access, working with CDFW, protection of water, and utilizing wildlife water developments are crucial to managing the natural resources. These elements combined for 46% of the overall comments.

Education and outreach was mentioned in 8% of the comments and 7% of the respondents felt that the BLM should take no further action in regards to protecting the natural resources. Additional comments included: Removing Burros, Seasonal Closures, Tamarisk removal, Planned rehabilitations, Prohibiting energy development, Monitoring, and Fence/Barrier installation.

**Cultural Resources:**

The 75 comments received for the question “What historic and prehistoric landmarks and other structures should be conserved, protected, and restored” generally indicated that these resources need to be protected within the monument.

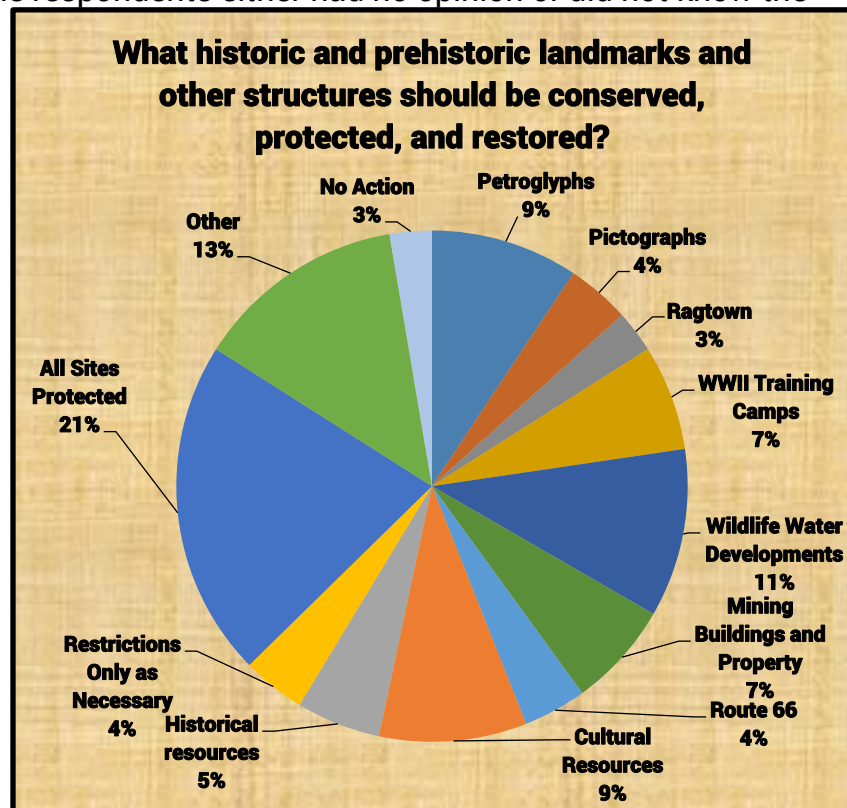
The common answers that were given indicated that all historic and prehistoric sites should be protected, but specifically Wildlife Water Developments, Petroglyphs, Cultural Resources, WWII Training camps, Mining Buildings/Property, and Historical Resources all were commented on 5% or more of the time. Each of the following received one comment each and fall into the “Other” category on the chart: Salt Song Trail, Ward Valley, Afton Canyon, Mojave Road, Ship Mountains, Railroad Stations, Cadiz Valley, Amboy Crater, Chemehuevi Valley, and the Pisgah Lava Flow. Comments suggesting that either no action be taken or that restrictions be implemented only as necessary were less common.

**Paleontological Resources:**

A large segment of the public who responded seems to be unsure as to what paleontological resources are present in the monument. Almost a third of the 43 total comments indicated that the respondents either had no opinion or did not know the answer to the question “Are there paleontological resources worthy of special management.”

In contrast to those figures however, 21% of the comments generally stated that all paleontological resources should receive special management. In addition, 19% suggested that Vertebrate Fossils and 7% indicated that Invertebrate Fossils should receive specific management. As with the other categories of questions, a certain

number of the public continue to feel that BLM should not take any additional management measures in regards to these resources. Some stressed the need for



scientific evaluations being completed prior to the implementation of any special management plans.

In addition to the questionnaire responses, the BLM received letters from Dr. Nigel Hughes from the University of California, Riverside and Professor Mark Webster from the University of Chicago. Both of the letters advocated the continued ability for the public to conduct “casual use” collection activities of invertebrate fossils specifically within the Marble Mountains. Professor Webster cited “1) the importance of fossils at the Marble Mountains as an educational and recreational resource; 2) the lack of equivalent alternative educational and recreational resources to southern California population centers; and 3) the negligible impact that casual, non-commercial, surface collecting of fossils has on the geological resources of the Marble Mountains.”

### **Visual Resources:**

In regards to visual resources within the monument, the public was asked two questions: “Are there visual resources that the BLM should protect” and “How should BLM provide for visual resource protection.”

On the first question, which received 46 comments, “Night Sky” was given as an example of a visual resource. This response was commented on by 28% of the respondents who felt that it should be protected. Another 20% of the public who answered this question indicated that all visual resources or viewscapes in the monument should be protected. However, a majority of the comments, 31%, stated that either no action be taken or that the resources are already protected.

Additional areas which received mention included: Afton Canyon, Route 66 Corridor, Cadiz Valley, Cadiz Dunes, Cady Mountains, Bonanza Spring, and Amboy Crater.

For those that feel protection of visual resources is necessary within the monument, 28% of the comments suggested that protection can be attained through prohibiting commercial development. Another 27% of comments stated that protection should be as necessary. Two comments mentioned that BLM should engage the public for education on visual resource management. Removing trash dumps, reclaiming closed/illegal routes, and installing signage each received one comment. Overall, only 11 answers were received for this question.

### **Acquisitions:**

In all, 30 comments were received in response to the question “Can you identify priorities for acquisition of lands and other interests within and adjacent to the monument”. Of the comments, 67% of them either stated no acquisitions are needed

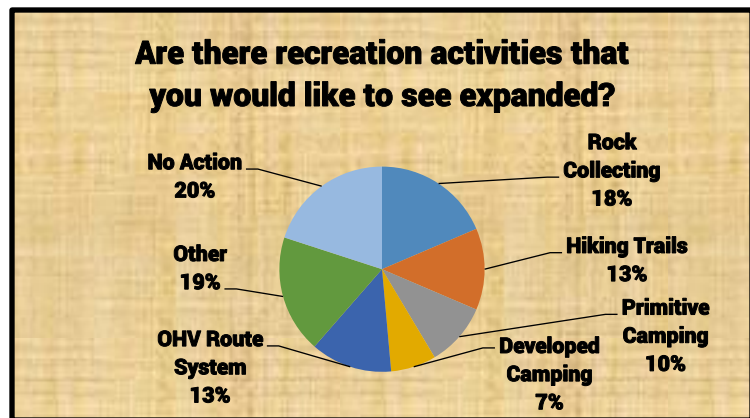


or that too much land has been designated already. Some of the respondents cited the additional financial burden that new acquisitions would bring as a basis for not wanting BLM to acquire more land. There was also a comment suggesting that BLM should reject any further acquisitions from the Mojave Desert Land Trust.

The few comments that did advocate for the acquisition of more land set the priorities as those lands related to private inholdings, at trailhead locations, along energy corridors, near key resources, or within tortoise habitat.

### Recreation:

The public was presented with three questions related to recreation. The first question, which asked “Are there recreation activities that you would like to see expanded or minimized”, received 77 total comments. The highest percentage of comments, 20%, indicated that no action should be taken to either expand or minimize recreation. Other respondents suggested that additional rock collecting opportunities be considered along with hiking/walking trails, OHV routes, and both primitive and developed campsites.



Respondents did not recommend that many recreation activities be minimized, however there were a few comments in regards to limiting OHV/dirt bike use, recreational shooting, and the use of pets (except for service animals).

The second question asked the public “Are additional facilities needed to provide for current recreational use”. This received a response of 28 comments. The largest amount of those, 36%, recommended that BLM take no action. For those that would like to see facilities developed, the interest is in BLM building an interpretive/visitor center as well as restrooms with running water. The need for telephone access also received two comments. The comments did not identify any specific locations for these facilities.

The last question specific to recreation dealt with the need for signage. It asked “Where would you suggest that the BLM install signage for directing visitors”. This question received a total of 44 comments. A slight majority of the public, 20%, would like to see additional signage at the main access points to the monument such as

along the interstates and highways. It was suggested that educational kiosks that include maps of points of interest and public facilities be installed at the main access points as well. Additionally, 18% of the comments reflected a desire to have hiking trails marked. In contrast, 16% indicated that BLM should not install any additional signage in the area. Other comments suggested signage should be posted to provide information at cultural and paleontological sites as well as to identify closed areas. Several comments also requested that the OHV route system be adequately marked so that visitors can enjoy the entire system.

### **Travel Management:**

Information on travel management was collected using three questions. The public was asked “Are there roads or trails within the monument incurring resource damage,” “Where should the BLM provide new or improved routes or trails” and “Should areas be specifically identified for motorized, non-motorized mechanized, or non-motorized use.”

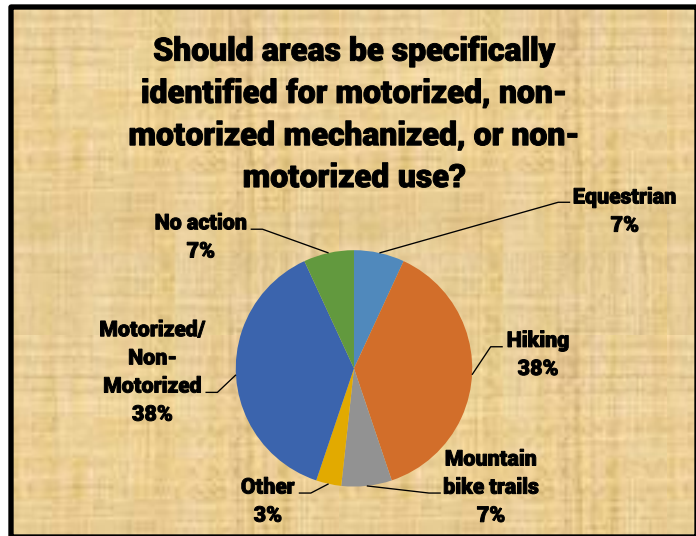
In total, 19 comments were submitted regarding whether or not trails within the monument are incurring resource damage. A couple of the comments named Route 66, Mojave Road, and Cadiz Road as being routes in need of repair. Other comments indicated that routes in general were being damaged. There was a difference in opinion however on the cause of the damage. Some of the respondents felt that the damage is primarily being caused by weather events such as flash flooding while others felt that OHV’s are causing the damage. A few comments suggested that OHV clubs such as the California Off-Road Vehicle Association (CORVA) are willing to volunteer and repair damaged routes. The largest feedback, 32%, suggested that none of routes were incurring damage.

The response to the second question relating to travel management received considerably more attention. When asked where new or improved routes or trails should be provided for, 71 comments were received. 45% of the comments requested that the BLM keep the existing routes open. Another 10% of the comments asked for the BLM to allow access to Wildlife Water Developments. A few comments asked for the BLM to perform regular maintenance on the primary routes through the monument and others asked for the BLM to open previously closed routes as well as provide access to paleontological sites. One individual questioned BLM’s authority to designate routes and another asked that the BLM designate an OHV open area in the monument.

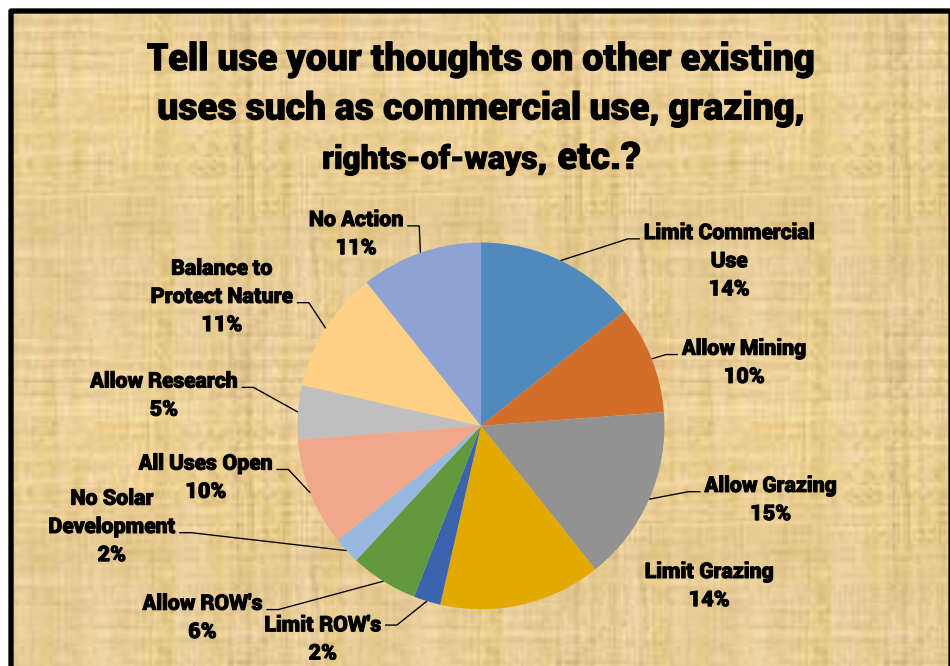
As far as non-motorized trails, the public is interested in having new hiking, equestrian, and biking trails established. These comments recommended that the BLM

implement non-motorized areas around Cadiz Dunes and Bonanza Spring as well as a bike path along Route 66. It was also suggested that we could administer trail building programs for youth during their winter break period.

The last question in the travel management category expanded upon the concept of improving or adding new trails. The public submitted 29 comments regarding whether or not areas should be specifically identified for motorized, non-motorized mechanized, or non-motorized use.



The majority of the comments recommend that areas should be specifically identified for motorized or non-motorized use. Non-motorized uses included hiking, equestrian, and biking. Only two comments suggested that the BLM take no action.



**Economic Uses:**

This category solicited a large amount of feedback. In total, 84 comments were received from the public when asked to give their thoughts on other existing uses such as commercial use, grazing, and rights-of-ways.

Overall, the comments were almost evenly split between those that feel existing uses should be allowed to continue and those that feel they should be limited to protect

nature or eliminated altogether. The topic of grazing received the most comments. Many feel that this use damages the land and is incompatible with the concept of a monument. However, just as many feel that grazing is an historical use and should be allowed to continue. This belief is also identified in the comments regarding mining. A few additional comments, that received less than 2% of the overall tally, promoted the development of an open-air museum, tourism for local towns, and concessionaires.

### **Concluding Questions**

The questionnaire ended with a few general questions aimed at identifying additional sources of information and possible cooperators.

When asked, “Do you know of or have information specific to the monument that the BLM should consider during the planning process,” the public provided 22 comments with the majority of them stating that they did not have any specific information related to the monument. Other comments included source information for literature, maps, photographs, GIS data, and various other records. A few gem and mineral books are also cited as having information about the area.

In relation to disbursement of the questionnaire itself, 45 comments were received asking that the questionnaire be sent out to various government entities, organizations and universities. These include Native American Tribes, Pasadena Lapidary Society, Society for the Conservation of Bighorn Sheep, Yucaipa Gem and Mineral Society, California Federation of Mineralogical Society, Southern California Friends of Minerology, Society of Vertebrate Paleontology, University of CA: Berkley and Riverside, and California State University: Fullerton, Las Angeles, and San Bernardino. These groups will be added to BLM’s mailing list to ensure that they receive notification and have an opportunity to participate in future public planning efforts for the monument.

Additionally, the public felt that these general groups should also receive notice of the questionnaire: rock and mineral clubs, residents over 40 years old, voting public, OHV groups, ranchers, all residents, naturalists, hikers, bikers, and photographers.

The final question asked “Are there additional issues that you would like addressed in the planning process.” Due to the similarities, those answers have been combined with the question “What topics would you like to see addressed in the plan” found on page 7 and 8 of this report.



