



United States Department of the Interior

BUREAU OF LAND MANAGEMENT

Las Vegas Field Office
4701 North Torrey Pines Dr
Las Vegas NV 89130
www.nv.blm.gov



In Reply Refer to:
6300 NV-058

November 20, 2007

To whom it may concern:

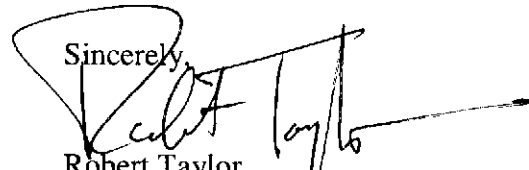
The Las Vegas Field Manager of the Las Vegas Field Office, Bureau of Land Management (BLM) has approved the Las Vegas Metropolitan Police Department request to use motorized equipment on a limited basis, for training within the boundaries of the Rainbow Mountain Wilderness Area and the La Madre Mountain Wilderness Area. Enclosed is a copy of the final environmental assessment and Decision Record...

The BLM decision may be appealed to the Interior Board of Land Appeals, Office of the Secretary, in accordance with the regulations contained in 43 CFR, Part 4 and the enclosed form 1842-1. If an appeal is taken, your notice of appeal must be filed in this office (at the above address) within 30 days from receipt of this decision. The appellant has the burden of showing that the decision appealed from is in error.

If you wish to file a petition pursuant to regulation 43 CFR 4.21 (58 FR 4939, January 19, 1993) or 43 CFR 2804.1 for a stay of the effectiveness of this decision during the time that your appeal is being reviewed by the Board, the petition for a stay must accompany your notice of appeal. A petition for a stay is required to show sufficient justification based on the standards listed below. Copies of the notice of appeal and petition for a stay must also be submitted to each party named in this decision and to the Interior Board of Land Appeals and to the appropriate office of the Solicitor (see 43 CFR 4.413) at the same time the original documents are filed with this office. If you request a stay, you have the burden of proof to demonstrate that a stay should be granted.

Only the BLM decision may be appealed through this process.

Sincerely,



Robert Taylor
Assistant Field Manager, NLCS

Enclosures (2)
Final LVMPD SAR Environmental Assessment and decision record
Form 1842-1

ENVIRONMENTAL ASSESSMENT

for

Search and Rescue Training In the La Madre Mountain and Rainbow Mountain Wilderness Areas



EA #NV058-07-386

Prepared by Kevin Routsong
Wilderness Ranger

Bureau of Land Management
Las Vegas Field Office

October 30, 2007

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BACKGROUND INFORMATION

Purpose and Need for the Proposed Action

The Las Vegas Metropolitan Police Department (LVMPD) is responsible for search and rescue operations within Clark County, NV and Red Rock Canyon National Conservation Area. The BLM is not equipped or trained in search and rescue and does not have the resources necessary to successfully locate and rescue victims. Rescues that occur within the Rainbow Mountain and La Madre Mountain Wilderness areas are within some of the most challenging and dangerous terrain in the country, including confined canyons, high-angle rescues, variable wind patterns, and inclement weather. LVMPD's Search and Rescue Unit is an organization of highly trained paid and non-paid professionals dedicated to saving lives through rescue, emergency medicine, and safety education. The unit is comprised of seven teams and is on call 24 hours a day, 7 days a week. The safety of team members and the public is, in no small part, due to the intense and demanding training for members of the team.

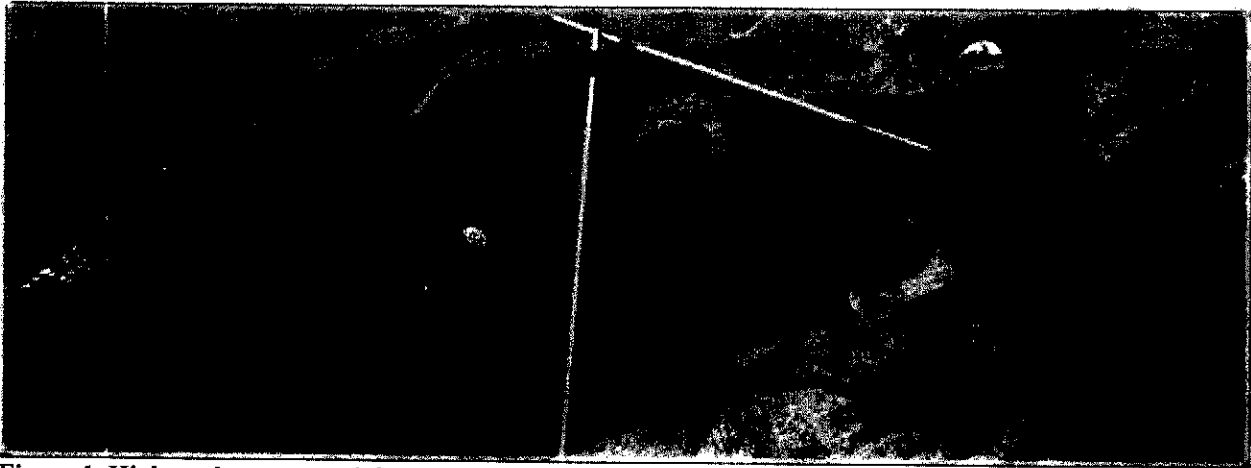


Figure 1 High angle rescue training

The eastern portion of the Rainbow Mountain and La Madre Mountain Wilderness contain highly scenic sandstone cliffs of a quality that also are suitable for technical rock climbing. This area is called the Sandstone Bluffs. These cliff systems attract numerous hikers, climbers, and sightseers with a range of skills and ability. In addition to numerous local visitors, visitors arrive from around the nation, as well as other countries. Most visitors know the area only as Red Rock Canyon; the eastern portions of the wilderness areas are located within the Red Rock Canyon National Conservation Area.

The combination of cliffs and visitors result in occasional injury accidents from falls, and disorientation for some who, during the course of exploring, find themselves stranded on remote ledges. Approximately 15 to 20 rescues occur each year within the Rainbow Mountain or La Madre Mountain Wilderness areas. All of these rescues are supported by helicopter and ground crews, and most utilize high angle rescue techniques. Rescue activities may occur 24 hours a day, 7 days a week, in all weather conditions.

The minimum standard set by the Department of the Interior (DOI) for short haul rescue training is 25 hours annually. The LVMPD trains rescue pilots through a 25 hour course, of which 12 hours are located in wilderness area. For search and rescue training to be effective, it needs to be in like terrain. There are no other areas within Clark County that have the same terrain and weather patterns as those of the Sandstone Bluffs. To assure the highest level of safety and preparedness, the LVMPD conducts search and rescue crew training that exceeds local, state, or federal agency guidelines. The LVMPD has conducted this training in the area since 1970. The areas were designated as wilderness and included within the National Wilderness Preservation System in 2002.



Figure 2 High-angle rescue training in the Lost Creek area

More than a million visitors a year come to Red Rock Canyon annually for a variety of recreation pursuits. Many of the visitors are not properly equipped for climbing or scrambling over the rocks and can easily find themselves in a precarious or dangerous situation. Falls can result in serious, life-threatening injuries and even fatality. The BLM's goal is to provide a challenging and safe recreation experience for the average visitor. When a visitors injure themselves, they expect to be rescued in a timely manner and rendered the highest degree of care. The LVMPD is tasked with providing that service.

Applicant

Las Vegas Metropolitan Police Department
Special Operations Division
Search and Rescue
3141 Sunrise Ave,
Las Vegas, NV 89101

Location of the Proposed Action

The LVMPD's Search and Rescue Unit identified 24 training sites within the La Madre Mountain and Rainbow Mountain Wilderness Areas in the Red Rock Canyon National Conservation Area. Sites were chosen because they were locations of previous rescues and exhibited unique challenges for high-angle rescues and a variety of wind patterns that would be

encountered in rescue operations. Another element in identifying training sites is proximity to the City of Las Vegas and ease of access for members of the team.

Search and Rescue training has historically occurred in the Calico Hills and is included in the locations for training by LVMPD Search and Rescue.

Enlarged maps of proposed training sites are found in Figures 5, 6 and 7. Locations were plotted from the locations provided by LVMPD and are sites of previous search and rescue operations. The latitude and longitude of the proposed training sites are shown below.

Lost Creek training sites:

36° 09.936' N, 115° 30.062' W
36° 09.316' N, 115° 30.150' W
36° 09.203' N, 115° 30.185' W
36° 09.107' N, 115° 30.224' W
36° 09.050' N, 115° 30.147' W

Bridge Mountain:

36° 08.114' N, 115° 30.122 W
36° 08.040' N, 115° 30.122 W
36° 07.935' N, 115° 30.075 W

White Rock:

36° 10.140' N, 115° 29.445' W
36° 10.271' N, 115° 29.689' W
36° 10.109' N, 115° 29.570' W
36° 09.925' N, 115° 29.496' W

Ice Box Canyon:

36° 08.257 N, 115° 30.614 W
36° 08.240 N, 115° 30.525 W
36° 08.222 N, 115° 30.554 W
36° 08.028 N, 115° 30.663 W

Juniper Canyon:

36° 06.750' N, 115° 29.370' W

Wall of Cracks:

36° 06.750' N, 115° 29.370' W

Black Velvet:

36° 10.140' N, 115° 29.445' W
36° 10.271' N, 115° 29.689' W
36° 10.109' N, 115° 29.570' W
36° 09.925' N, 115° 29.496' W

Turtle Back:

36° 16.831' N, 115° 26.764' W

Pine Creek Canyon:

36° 07.355' N, 115° 29.594' W
36° 08.276' N, 115° 30.736' W
36° 08.176' N, 115° 30.583' W

First Creek:

36° 05.158' N, 115° 29.088' W
36° 04.970' N, 115° 29.451' W

Rainbow Wall:

36° 06.968' N, 115° 29.741' W
36° 06.576' N, 115° 29.784' W

Mt Wilson/Sherwood Forest:

36° 05.539' N, 115° 28.872' W
36° 05.457' N, 115° 28.932' W

Oak Creek:

36° 06.185' N, 115° 29.627' W

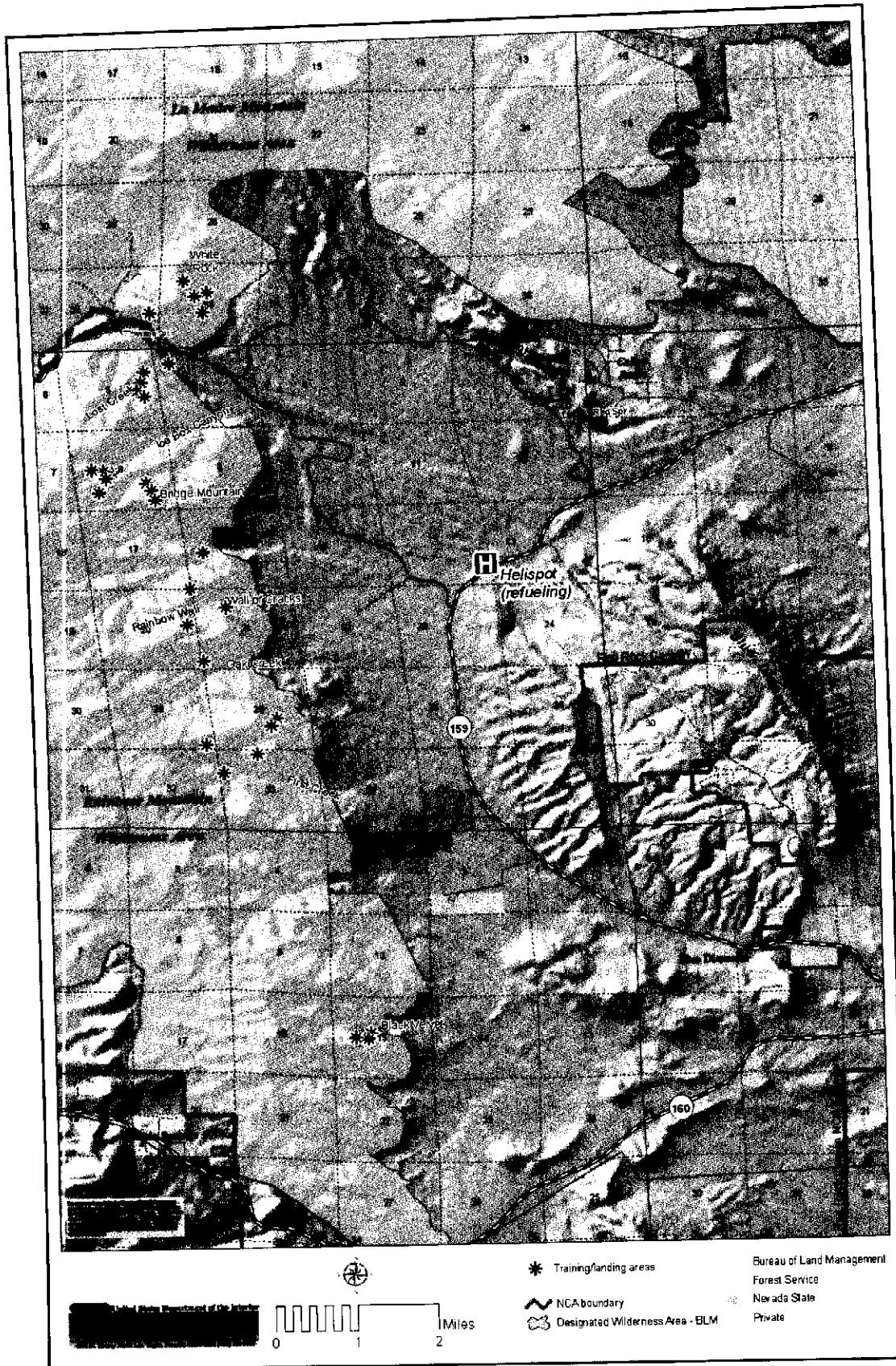


Figure 3 Training sites within Red Rock Canyon National Conservation Area

Conformance with Land Use Plan

The General Management Plan (GMP) for Red Rock Canyon National Conservation Area and the Las Vegas Resource Management Plan are silent on the issue of search and rescue training. Although not specifically identified in the GMP/RMP for Red Rock Canyon, search and rescue training is consistent with past practices in the National Conservation Area, as well as the Las Vegas Field Office's top priority in its' Guiding Principles and Strategic Direction for public and employee health and safety

The GMP does restrict climbing within 50 feet of rock art.

DESCRIPTION OF THE PROPOSED ACTION AND ALTERNATIVES

The proposed action and alternatives were derived from the Minimum Requirement Decision Guide, consultation with the National Park Service on search and rescue training in Yosemite National Park, other national parks, forests and BLM areas with designated wilderness.

Proposed Action

Authorize LVMPD Search and Rescue to conduct training, at the sites requested, including the landing of helicopters in designated wilderness areas within Red Rock Canyon National Conservation Area for a total of 48 hours in a calendar year. No limitation is placed upon the number of days during which the training could occur, or time of season except that the total number of hours of training in designated wilderness cannot exceed 48 hours a year.

Red Rock Canyon National Conservation Area (NCA) lies immediately to the west of the City of Las Vegas and is recognized regionally, nationally, and internationally for its' scenic resources, recreation opportunities, and as one of the top five climbing areas in the U.S. Hundreds of thousands of visitors annually visit Red Rock Canyon to scramble on the sandstone boulders and mountains and hike the cool, verdant canyons within the NCA. Occasionally, visitors and experienced climbers become injured or unable to climb down. In the case of injuries or fatalities, it is necessary to reach victims in a timely manner, effect a rescue, and transport them to the nearest hospital. Experience has shown that if a victim can be located and removed within one hour, the chances for survival increase significantly. The LVMPD is the primary agency responsible for search and rescue operations in Red Rock Canyon and southern Nevada. LVMPD's search and rescue team is composed of police and civilian volunteers from the Las Vegas area. Due to the extreme terrain and weather conditions that may be encountered within the Spring Mountains and Red Rock Canyon, the most expedient and safest method of rescue is with the use of helicopters.

In order to assure the safety of the rescue pilots and ground crews, and to provide the greatest care to victims, the LVMPD Search and Rescue Unit proposes to conduct search and rescue training in wilderness areas and other non-wilderness areas in the Red Rock Canyon National Conservation Area. Training would include landing of a helicopter, generally prohibited under

the Wilderness Act of 1964 unless it is the minimum necessary for the administration of the area as wilderness.

Two types of training are proposed: Pilot training, and search and rescue crew training. Crew Training generally involves the use of helicopters to simulate actual rescues. Pilot training involves flying in narrow canyons in a variety of weather conditions and may occur at night using night-vision goggles, to orient pilots to the rigors of flying in confined canyons with challenging wind patterns. Pilot training is generally in increments of two hours or more and routinely involves approximately 6 landings per session, and usually occurs at night on weekdays. Pilot training sessions would normally begin in one canyon and move into progressively more difficult canyons as the trainee's abilities advance.



Figure 4 Example of one-skid landing in remote areas

Rescue crew training involves landing or toe-in landings in remote areas and deploying crews and equipment, long-line extraction of victims, and retrieval of rescue teams and equipment. Rescue teams practice leave-no-trace ethics and do not clear vegetation or improve helispots. Dates, locations and extent of the training would be up to LVMPD. LVMPD would coordinate training dates with the BLM so as not to impact permitted recreation activity. Search and Rescue crew training would occur on Saturdays from January to September, during daytime, for a maximum of 7 hours. During search and rescue crew training, a maximum of 60 landings in designated wilderness could occur during the session.

One or two landing sites in a training area would be used during a training session. Skills practiced include one skid, two skid, and toe-in landings, short haul, fast rope, hoist, sling loading, and insertion and extraction of personnel. No closures of the area to visitors are proposed during the training sessions. Staging areas are located outside of the wilderness areas.

The annual training schedule also includes practice at Calico Hills (a non-wilderness site in the Red Rock Canyon NCA). Since this is a non-wilderness location, this part of the training is not discussed in detail for this proposal. Similar skills are practiced at the Calico Hills; however, the skills utilized on big wall cliffs and within narrow and confined canyons can not be replicated there.

Support equipment for crew training involving helicopters requires on-site refueling of the aircraft to maximize aircraft performance and optimize payloads. Refueling locations are generally at parking areas along the scenic loop drive.

Search and Rescue Training within Red Rock Canyon and designated wilderness that does not require the use of aircraft or motorized equipment would be allowed to continue in the same manner and degree as has historically occurred.

Pilot training, excluding landing or deployment of personnel or equipment in designated wilderness, could occur without approval of the BLM as it managed under FAA regulations and is not a part of this alternative.

Alternative “A”

This alternative is the similar as the proposed action except, LVMPD Search and Rescue would be limited to two calendar days a year for training. The minimum tools assessment defined two days as the minimum requirement for training based upon National Park Service, Yosemite National park training in wilderness. No other training in designated wilderness was identified on BLM, U.S. Forest Service or other National Park Service land.

Pilot training that does not involve landing in wilderness areas, would not be subject to the two day limit and would be allowed to continue under FAA rules.

Training in the Calico Hills would continue in the same manner and degree as has historically occurred.

Alternative “B”

LVMPD would only be authorized to conduct search and rescue training in the Calico Hills; south of Highway 160, near Potosi Mountain; and on the east slope of Blue Diamond Hill. Pilot training, except for landing, could continue in the canyons in designated wilderness, subject to FAA rules.

Pilot training, that does not involve landing in wilderness areas, would be allowed to continue under FAA rules.

Training in the Calico Hills would continue in the same manner and degree as has historically occurred.

No Action Alternative

Under this alternative, LVMPD Search and Rescue would not be authorized to conduct any rescue training in designated wilderness areas.

Training would be allowed in the Calico Hills in the same manner and degree as it has historically occurred.

Alternatives Considered but Eliminated from Detailed Analysis

Options for training in the Valley of Fire and the north Muddy Mountains were discussed with the LVMPD Search and Rescue team and were eliminated from further analysis due to logistics problems in transporting personnel to the sites and flight time from the North Las Vegas Airport for training. Additionally, these sites did not exhibit the same flight conditions encountered in the Red Rock area, did not have similar topography, and would require them to be out of the immediate area of Las Vegas in the event of an emergency for law enforcement aerial support.

DESCRIPTION OF THE AFFECTED ENVIRONMENT

A detail description of the affected environment is contained in the Red Rock Canyon General Management Plan.

The following resources are not impacted or affected by the proposed action: land ownership, geology, soils, topography, vegetation, social and economic values, flood plains, riparian areas, wetlands, wild and scenic rivers, migratory birds, prime or unique farmlands, water quality, Native American religious concerns, hazardous and solid wastes, and visual resources.

Wilderness

The proposed action and Alternative "A" would be within the La Madre Mountain and Rainbow Mountain Wilderness Areas.

Solitude

Noise from aircraft flying in the canyon reverberates off canyon walls and is amplified by the confinement of the narrow canyons and would significantly, albeit it temporarily, reduce the opportunity to enjoy the solitude and tranquility normally found in the isolated reaches of the canyons in Red Rock Canyon.

The presence of large numbers of personnel, associated with training, would significantly reduce potential to enjoy the tranquility and solitude normally found in the various canyons.

Outstanding opportunity for unconfined recreation

There would be no impact on the opportunity to find and enjoy unconfined recreation as a result of search and rescue training.

Naturalness

There would not be any impact to the naturalness of the area due to search and rescue training.

Wildlife

Aircraft noise and human activity displace wildlife from their habitat and may have a detrimental impact during mating or lambing seasons if the activity is prolonged or damages habitat. The

proposed activity is generally of very short duration and will occur in broadly disbursed areas and will have limited impact on wildlife in the area.

Species of concern

Desert tortoise and bighorn sheep are found within the various training locations proposed. Bighorn sheep may be temporarily displaced due to increased activity but this is anticipated to be isolated to individual training sites and for very short duration throughout the year.

Support personnel and ground activity at staging areas pose some risk to desert tortoise, however, the majority of training occurs in periods of relative inactivity for tortoise and in low density areas along the scenic loop drive. Potential impacts are minimal.

Cultural/Historic

The potential for damage to rock art sites and cultural resources are minimal in the higher elevations and in the canyons. There is some potential for damage to rock art sites in the Willow Springs area from climbing. The GMP for Red Rock Canyon limits climbing within 50 feet of rock art.

ENVIRONMENTAL CONSEQUENCES

Proposed Action

No impacts are anticipated to the natural environment as the actions do not involve surface disturbing activity and occur, for the most part, in areas that are resistant to change or impact.

Impacts to the wilderness values of solitude and unconfined recreation would be diminished during training exercises due to the noise of the helicopter. Noise is ephemeral in nature and of relative limited duration depending upon the length of the exercise and the frequency of training in the year.

Alternative "A"

The environmental consequences to the natural resources are similar to the proposed action.

Impacts to wilderness values of solitude and opportunity to experience unconfined recreation opportunities would be less frequent than under the proposed action but the duration may be significantly longer at any one site as the trainings would be limited to two days and longer during those two days.

Alternative "B"

Potential impacts to natural resources would be the same as the proposed action.

There would be no impacts to wilderness values under this alternative.

Environmental Justice

No social or economic impacts would result from approving or denying the proposed action or any of the alternatives on minority populations, low-income communities, and tribes. The benefits from search and rescue actions are uniformly applied cross all levels of the community and our visitors irrespective of gender, race, ethnicity, or economic status.

No Action Alternative

Training in conditions and environments similar to actual search and rescue emergencies is critical to the safety of team members and the public. Victims may be placed at higher risk when team members have not practiced high-angle rescues, are unfamiliar with the terrain, and may not be proficient in the skills and techniques necessary to effect a particularly difficult rescue.

There would be no impacts to wilderness values under this alternative.

Cumulative Impacts

Historically, LVMPD Search and Rescue training has occurred in Red Rock Canyon for up to 14 days a year, with no limitation on duration or locations. Reductions in the number of days training is allowed, management of training sites and durations of training would have a beneficial impact on visitor experiences and solitude.

RECOMMENDED MITIGATION MEASURES

1. LVMPD Search and Rescue shall notify the BLM of proposed training dates, times, duration, and the number of personnel involved not less than 5 calendar days prior to the proposed training dates.
2. No refueling of aircraft may be done at any location on the scenic loop drive. Refueling operations, except in the case of actual emergency search and rescues, must be done at the helipad at the dedication site on State Route 159 or the Red Rock Canyon Fire Station.
3. No permanent anchors will be installed for training purposes.
4. Trees, brush or other vegetation shall not be removed to construct helicopter landing pads, parking or logistic areas.
5. All vehicle use shall be limited to existing roads designated as open or for administrative use in the Red Rock Canyon General Management Plan.

6. Public use of the Scenic Loop Drive, Rocky Gap Road, White Rock Road, Oak Creek Road, parking areas, and recreation sites shall not be limited, restricted or impeded due to LVMPD Search and Rescue training.
7. Parking for volunteers, team members and support equipment shall be in approved parking areas and shall not occupy more than 25% of designated parking areas. No authorization is approved for parking off paved or surfaced areas without prior written approval.

RESIDUAL IMPACTS

Regardless of the alternative selected, noise and visitor experience will be impacted to varying degrees in the canyons and Calico Hills. These impacts are fleeting and of relatively short duration and will have no long-term impacts on the area. Use of multiple training sites will disperse the audio impacts over a large area reducing the duration at any one site. The types of activity are similar to casual use, sport and technical rock climbing already taking place within the wilderness areas and will have no long-term or unmitigated impacts upon the resource.



Figure 5 Training sites in the Lost Creek, White Rock and Ice Box Canyon area



Figure 6 Training sites in the Oak Creek and First Creek area

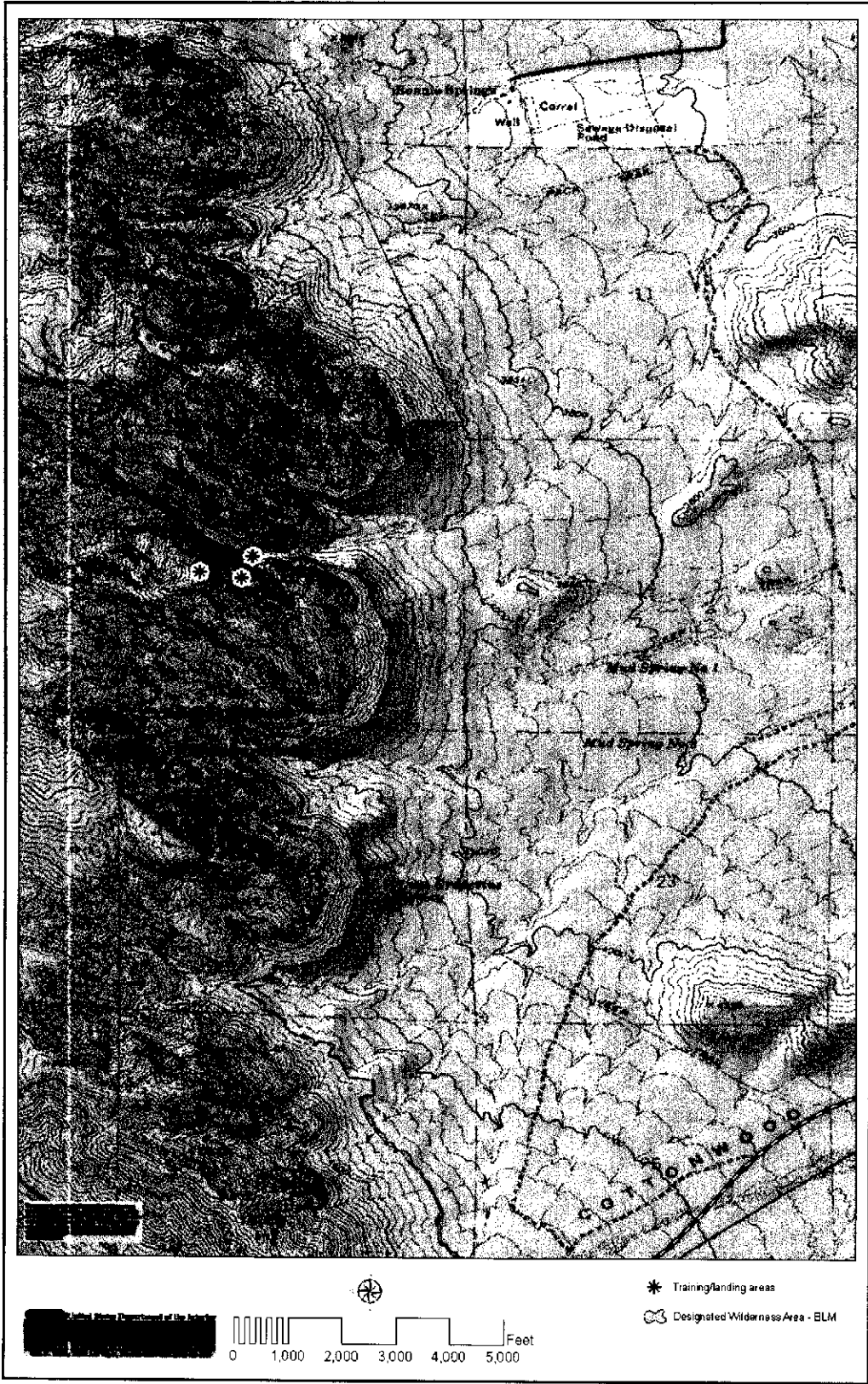



Figure 7 Training sites in the Black Velvet area

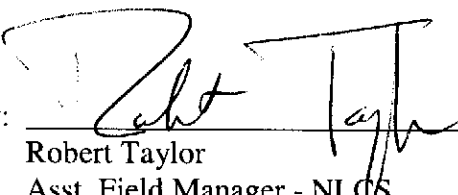
CONSULTATION AND COORDINATION

- November, 2006 Erika Schumacher, BLM LVFO Law Enforcement Supervisor coordinates meeting with LVMPD SAR to discuss training in the La Madre Mountain and Rainbow Mountain Wilderness Areas.
- January 19, 2007 Notice of proposed action was sent to the public and 30 day public comment period on the proposed search and rescue training in the La Madre Mountain and Rainbow Mountain Wilderness Areas. Public comments closed February 18, 2007.
- January 26, 2007 Public comment period was extended to February 26, 2007 via letter to the public.
- March 1, 2007 Summary of public comments prepared by James Sippel, Wilderness Planner for management review.
- March, 2007 Juan Palma, Bob Taylor and James Sippel met with LVMPD, at Congresswoman Berkley's office with Todd Story to discuss the minimum tools assessment and public comments received on the proposed action.
- June 20, 2007 Meeting at Congresswoman Berkley's office, at the request of Todd Story to review status of proposal. Present at the meeting were; Sgt. Fletcher, Sgt. Ojeda, Deputy Chief McCurdy, Juan Palma, Bob Taylor and Todd Story. LVMPD requested that BLM consider allowing the two days identified in the Minimum Tools Assessment, be broken down in smaller increments over the year, not to exceed a total of 48 hours over an unspecified number of days. BLM agreed to include that in the assessment.
- August 6, 2007. At the request of the LVMPD, a public meeting was held at the BLM office at 4701 N. Torrey Pines Drive to allow LVMPD an opportunity to discuss training operations that are required to ensure team proficiency.
- August 15, 2007 Proposed action, including LVMPD alternative, entered in the Las Vegas NEPA system for staff comment and review.
- The following BLM staff provided comments on the proposed action:
Michael Johnson, Environmental Coordinator
Mark Boatwright, NLCS Archaeologist
Christina Lund, Botanist
Sarah Peterson, Hydrologist
David Fanning, Geologist
Everett Bartz, Range Conservationist

The following BLM specialists reviewed, provided comments and/or assisted in the preparation of the environmental assessment:

- Angie Lara, Associate Field Manager
- Robert Taylor, Asst. Field Manager – NLCS
- Lisa Christianson, Acting Red Rock Canyon NCA Manager
- Jeff Steinmetz, Environmental Protection Specialist

Prepared by:  Date: Nov 19, 2007
Kevin Routsong
Wilderness Ranger

Approved by:  Date: 11/19/07
Robert Taylor
Asst. Field Manager - NLCS



ARTHUR CARHART NATIONAL WILDERNESS TRAINING CENTER

MINIMUM REQUIREMENTS DECISION GUIDE

WORKSHEETS

“ . . . except as necessary to meet minimum requirements for the administration of the area for the purpose of this Act...”

– the Wilderness Act, 1964

Please refer to the accompanying MRDG *Instructions* for filling out this guide. The spaces in the worksheets will expand as necessary as you enter your response.

Step 1: Determine if any administrative action is necessary.

Description: Briefly describe the situation that may prompt action.

A request has been made to allow Las Vegas Metropolitan Police Department Search and Rescue training within the boundaries of the La Madre and Rainbow Mountain Wilderness Areas.

To determine if administrative action is necessary, answer the questions listed in A - F on the following pages.

A. Describe Valid Existing Rights or Special Provisions of Wilderness Legislation

Are there valid existing rights or is there a special provision in wilderness legislation (the Wilderness Act of 1964 or subsequent wilderness laws) that allows consideration of action involving Section 4(c) uses? Cite law and section.

Yes: No: Not Applicable:

Explain:

No such provisions for this activity is specifically provided in the Clark County Conservation of Public Land and Natural Resources Act of 2002; the legislation that designated the Rainbow Mountain and La Madre Mountain Wilderness areas.

Section 4(d)(1) of the Wilderness Act states "...the use of aircraft..., where these uses have already become established, may be permitted to continue subject to such restrictions as the Secretary... deems desirable." Helicopter landing associated with search and rescue training occurred prior to wilderness designation.

B. Describe Requirements of Other Legislation

Do other laws require action?

Yes: No: Not Applicable:

Explain:

No other laws supersede the applicable wilderness legislation for this proposed activity.

METRO is tasked with search and rescue in Clark County under Nevada Revised Statute 41.500.

C. Describe Other Guidance

Does taking action conform to and implement relevant standards and guidelines and direction contained in agency policy, unit and wilderness management plans, species recovery plans, tribal government agreements, state and local government and interagency agreements?

Yes: No: Not Applicable:

Explain:

Although agreements are in place which establish local Search and Rescue responsibilities, these agreements do not address training.

Section 6302.20 (e) of the BLM Wilderness Management Regulations states “you must not:...”
“Landing aircraft. Or drop or pickup of any material, supplies or persons by means of aircraft, including a helicopter,...”

Subpart 6303 – Administrative and Emergency Functions states “As necessary to meet minimum requirements for the administration of the wilderness area, BLM may: (a) ... land aircraft, in designated wilderness;” and may “(b) Prescribe conditions under which ... local agencies may use,....wilderness areas...”

Subpart 6303 (d) states that the BLM may “Prescribe measures that may be used in emergencies involving health and safety of persons in the area, including, but not limited to, the use of motorized equipment, mechanical transport, aircraft,...”

BLM Manual 8560 G. 4. states that “Sections 4©, 4(d), and 5 provide special exceptions to the prohibitions in section 4(d) by providing for the following activities... 5. Use of aircraft..., where already established, may be permitted to continue.”

BLM Manual 8560.08 “*Meaning of the Congressional Mandate.* The Wilderness Act is based on three fundamental concepts: wilderness preservation, wilderness use, and accommodating certain nonconforming uses.”

D. Describe Options Outside of Wilderness

Can this situation be resolved by an administrative activity outside of wilderness?

Yes: No:

Explain:

There are multiple aspects to search and rescue training, some aspects can take place in a classroom setting, but other aspects, for the training to be effective, need to be in like terrain. The Sandstone Bluffs area has unique combination of terrain and weather patterns that are not common to other areas within Clark County. Rescues that occur within the Rainbow Mountain and La Madre Mountain Wilderness areas are within some of the most challenging terrain in the county and include confined canyons, thousand foot cliffs, high angle rescues, variable wind patterns, and inclement weather. The majority of training can be achieved on cliff sides found in the area outside of the wilderness. These alternate cliffs can provide the same kinds of high angle conditions on which to practice most helicopter supported rescue simulations. However,

some training needs to also occur on landing sites within the very canyons and cliffs of the wilderness where rescue operations will take place in order for pilots to simulate actual rescue conditions and prepare for future rescue operations.

E. Wilderness Character

Does taking administrative action preserve or impair wilderness character, as described by the qualities listed below?

Untrammeled: **Preserve:** **Impair:**

Explain:

Although not a significant impact, the use of helicopters and the associated noise from the search and rescue training activities do impede the free play of activities within the wilderness. However, the sounds of rotor and engine noise are generally confined to the immediate canyon where training is occurring and relatively short in duration.

Undeveloped: **Preserve:** **Impair:**

Explain:

There are no proposed development of permanent activities proposed with search and rescue training in wilderness areas.

Natural: **Preserve:** **Impair:**

Explain:

Under the principle of nondegradation, the central thrust of BLM wilderness management is to prevent degradation of natural conditions, opportunities for solitude or primitive recreation and special features. Helicopter noise is ephemeral and has little, if any impact on naturalness of the La Madre Mountain or Rainbow Mountain Wilderness areas. Activity associated with the training for high-angle rescues is similar to activity that already exists in the canyons from permitted recreation climbing.

Noise and the presence of rescue personnel may temporarily displace wildlife during training.

Outstanding opportunities for solitude or a primitive and unconfined type of recreation:

Preserve: **Impair:**

Explain:

During training days, the proposed helicopter supported search and rescue training would have a strong negative impact on solitude. The sounds of the helicopter would dominate the setting, and cause most people to leave the area. Most of the impact would be limited to a particular canyon, but adjacent canyons and ridges could also experience some disruption. Opportunities for primitive and unconfined recreation would also receive a strong negative impact. Most visitors would feel driven out of the area by the training as it would place limits on the experience available to visitors. However, because Wilderness is, in part, devoted to the public purpose of recreation, it might be considered that search and rescue training could support recreation, of a

primitive and unconfined type, in a safe manner in an area of known hazards with a history of injury to recreationists

Other unique components that reflect the character of this wilderness:

Preserve: Impair: Not Applicable:

Explain:

F. Describe Effects to the Public Purposes of Wilderness

Is taking administrative action consistent with the public purposes for wilderness (as stated in Section 4(b) of the Wilderness Act) of recreation, scenic, scientific, education, conservation, and historical use?

Recreation: Yes: No: Not Applicable:

Explain:

Search and rescue activity may provide support for recreation, of a primitive and unconfined type, in a safe manner in an area of known hazards with a history of injury to recreationists.

Scenic: Yes: No: Not Applicable:

Explain:

Scientific: Yes: No: Not Applicable:

Explain:

Education: Yes: No: Not Applicable:

Explain:

Conservation: Yes: No: Not Applicable:

Explain:

A poorly trained crew, during an actual rescue mission, would be at risk of an accident which would harm the natural conditions of the area.

Historical use: Yes: No: Not Applicable:

Explain:

Step 1 Decision: Is any administrative action necessary?

Yes: No: More information needed:

Explain:

For training to be effective, it needs to be in like terrain. Although many aspects of search and rescue training can take place on cliffs and canyons outside of wilderness, in order to prepare pilots for future rescues, some training needs to also occur on the landing sites within the very canyons and cliffs in the wilderness where rescue operations will take place. Some of these landing sites are highly technical and require pilot familiarity in order to be used safely in the future.

If action is necessary, proceed to Step 2 to determine the minimum activity.

Step 2: Determine the minimum activity.

Description of Alternatives

For each alternative, describe what methods and techniques will be used, when the activity will take place, where the activity will take place, what mitigation measures are necessary, and the general effects to the wilderness resource and character.

Alternative # 1

Description:

Under this alternative proposed by the LVMPD, two types of training would occur: Pilot training, and search and rescue crew training. Both types of training incorporate helicopter practice. Pilot training would occur 2 times per year with approximately 6 landings per session, and usually occur at night on weekdays. Pilot training sessions would normally begin in one canyon and move into progressively more difficult canyons as the trainee's abilities advance. Search and Rescue crew training would occur on 10 Saturdays per year from January to September, during daytime, for a maximum of 7 hours. During search and rescue crew training, a maximum of 60 landings could occur during the session.

The following wilderness sites would be utilized for the training (the number of different landing sites in the training area is in brackets):

- White Rock Hills (5)
- Lost Creek (5)
- Icebox Canyon (6)
- Bridge Mountain (3)
- Pine Creek (2)
- Juniper Canyon (2)
- Oak Creek Canyon (1)
- Mount Wilson (2)
- First Creek (3)
- Black Velvet Canyon (3)

One or two landing sites in a training area would be used during a training session. Skills practiced include one skid, two skid, and toe in landings, short haul, fast rope, hoist, sling loading, and insertion and extraction of personnel. No installations or modifications of the wilderness would occur. No closures of the area to visitors would occur during the training sessions. Staging areas would be located outside of the wilderness areas. Additional training would also occur outside of wilderness at the Calico Hills.

Effects:

Wilderness Character

“Untrammeled”

“Undeveloped”

“Natural”

“Outstanding opportunities for solitude or a primitive and unconfined type of recreation”

All four elements of Wilderness character would be impacted under this alternative, but the greatest impact would be to solitude or a primitive and unconfined types of recreation. During those dates when training occurs, solitude and primitive recreation would be lost entirely due to the intensity of noise.

Heritage and Cultural Resources

Not applicable.

Maintaining Traditional Skills

Not applicable.

Special Provisions

Not applicable.

Safety of Visitors, Personnel, and Contractors

Search and rescue personnel would be fully trained under this alternative and skills would be sufficiently high so as to provide rescue to injured visitors under all but the most extreme weather conditions.

Economic and Time Constraints

Not applicable.

Additional Wilderness-specific Comparison Criteria

Not applicable.

Alternative # 2

Description:

Under this alternative METRO would be allowed to conduct search and rescue training for a cumulative period of 48 hours a year. At the discretion of METRO, training could be a minimum of two hours a day and a maximum of twenty-four sessions per calendar year, not to exceed the 48 hours cumulative total per year. Pilot training, including helicopter landings, may require approximately 32 landings per session, in daylight or at night. Pilot training would normally begin in one canyon and move into progressively more difficult canyons as the trainee's abilities advance. Skills practiced include one skid, two skid, and toe in landings. No installations or modifications of the wilderness would occur. No closures of the area to visitors would occur during the training sessions. The following wilderness sites would be utilized for the training (the number of different landing sites in the training area is in brackets):

- White Rock Hills (5)
- Lost Creek (5)
- Icebox Canyon (6)
- Bridge Mountain (3)
- Pine Creek (2)

- Juniper Canyon (2)
- Oak Creek Canyon (1)
- Mount Wilson (2)
- First Creek (3)
- Black Velvet Canyon (3)

Search and rescue crew training without helicopters, motorized, or mechanized transportation may occur within the wilderness as needed. Search and rescue crew training with helicopters would take place as needed on any of the following cliffs and canyons outside of wilderness:

- Cliffs of the Calico Hills
- Canyons and cliffs on the east side of Mount Potosi
- Canyons and cliffs in the Lucky Strike Canyon area
- Cliffs on the ridgeline south of Box Canyon
- Other suitable canyons and cliffs outside of wilderness

Effects:

Wilderness Character

“Untrammeled”

“Undeveloped”

“Natural”

“Outstanding opportunities for solitude or a primitive and unconfined type of recreation”

All four elements of Wilderness character would be impacted under this alternative, but the greatest impact would be to solitude or a primitive and unconfined types of recreation. During those dates when training occurs, solitude and primitive recreation would be lost entirely due to the intensity of noise, however, to a much less degree than the Alternative 1 proposal.

Heritage and Cultural Resources

Not applicable.

Maintaining Traditional Skills

Not applicable.

Special Provisions

Not applicable.

Safety of Visitors, Personnel, and Contractors

Search and rescue personnel would be fully trained under this alternative, however, the lack of repetitive training in the wilderness may cause rescue personnel to back off in weather situations that they might have been more willing to work in had they trained to the level described in alternative 1. As a result, some rescues may be delayed.

Economic and Time Constraints

Not applicable.

Additional Wilderness-specific Comparison Criteria

Not applicable.

Alternative # 3

Description:

Effects:

Wilderness Character

“Untrammeled”

“Undeveloped”

“Natural”

“Outstanding opportunities for solitude or a primitive and unconfined type of recreation”

Heritage and Cultural Resources

Maintaining Traditional Skills

Special Provisions

Safety of Visitors, Personnel, and Contractors

Economic and Time Constraints

Additional Wilderness-specific Comparison Criteria

Step 2 Decision: What is the Minimum Activity?

The selected alternative is:

Alternative 2

Describe the rationale for selecting this alternative:

The alternative 2 combination of training inside and outside wilderness is the minimum necessary to train search and rescue personnel capable of conducting rescues in the wilderness under most weather conditions. The proposed training flights and landings in the wilderness will provide pilots with the personal knowledge and familiarity of the canyons and cliffs to achieve safe and effective rescue missions. The higher degree of training proposed by the LVMPD in Alternative 1 is not the minimum necessary since other cliffs and canyons outside the wilderness could be utilized for training.

Describe any monitoring and reporting requirements:

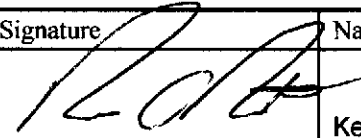

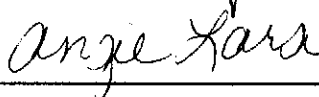
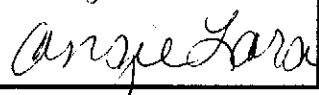
METRO will notify the BLM of the dates and length of training sessions, for training in designated wilderness areas at least 72 hours in advance to ensure there are no conflicts with permitted activities within Red Rock. The BLM shall prepare an annual report on METRO training and provide copies to interested parties in January of each year.

BLM shall provide a notice of all emergency rescues to interested parties as rescues occur.

Please check any Wilderness Act Section 4(c) uses approved in this alternative:

- | | |
|-----------------------------------------------|---------------------------------------------------------|
| <input type="checkbox"/> mechanical transport | <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> landing of aircraft |
| <input type="checkbox"/> motorized equipment | <input type="checkbox"/> temporary road |
| <input type="checkbox"/> motor vehicles | <input type="checkbox"/> structure or installation |
| <input type="checkbox"/> motorboats | |

Be sure to record and report any authorizations of Wilderness Act Section 4(c) uses according to agency procedures.

Approvals	Signature	Name	Position	Date
Prepared by:		Kevin Routsong	Wilderness Ranger	
Recommended:		Robert Taylor	Asst. Field Manager NLCS	4/19/07
Recommended:		Angie Lara	Associate Field Manager	11/30/07
Approved:		Juan Palma	Field Manager Las Vegas Field Office	11/20/07