



# Wonder Valley Community Center

May 23, 2015

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# BLM West Mojave (WEMO) Route Network Project

Which is also a

Draft Amendment to the  
California Desert Conservation Plan

And, a

Supplemental Environmental Impact  
Statement (NEPA)

for the

California Desert District

# BLM Multiple Use Mission

## under the Federal Land Policy and Management Act (FLPMA)

### 1976

- Sustain the health and productivity of the public lands for the use and enjoyment of *present* and *future* generations.
- The Bureau accomplishes this by managing such activities as *outdoor recreation, livestock grazing, mineral development, and energy production*, and by conserving *natural, historical, cultural, and other* resources on public lands.

# WEMO Purpose & Need

relating to travel management. Plan also considers grazing.

- To provide a framework for transportation **management**, and specific travel management **implementation strategies** in Limited Access areas of the West Mojave Planning Area.

## **FRAMEWORK AND STRATEGIES WOULD**

1. **Limit conflicts and threats** to sensitive resources
2. **Respond** to *current and anticipated future transportation & travel needs*,
3. **Provide** *appropriate recreational access*, and
4. **Be consistent** with overall vehicle access goal of 2006 WEMO plan.

# 4 Alternatives – National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA) Requirement for EIS (Environmental Impact Statement)

- **Alternative 1 – 5,338 miles – No Action Alternative (the 2006 WEMO Plan)**
- Alternative 2 – 4,292 miles – Resource Conservation Enhancement
- **Alternative 3 – 10,428 miles – Public Lands Access (Preferred Alternative)**
- Alternative 4 – 5,782 miles – Community Access Enhancement

All 4 Alternatives use a patchwork of federal and county roads to achieve the transportation network.  
*Orphan Routes* – BLM designated OHV routes that start/end at BLM boundaries, are common.

**There are many problems with the plan.**

This presentation addresses the use and deterioration of county roads in CSAs and residential communities, community disruption, public health, property values, tax revenues, violation of the County OHV Ordinance, and the lack of coordination with the County, the Sheriff, and Code Enforcement.

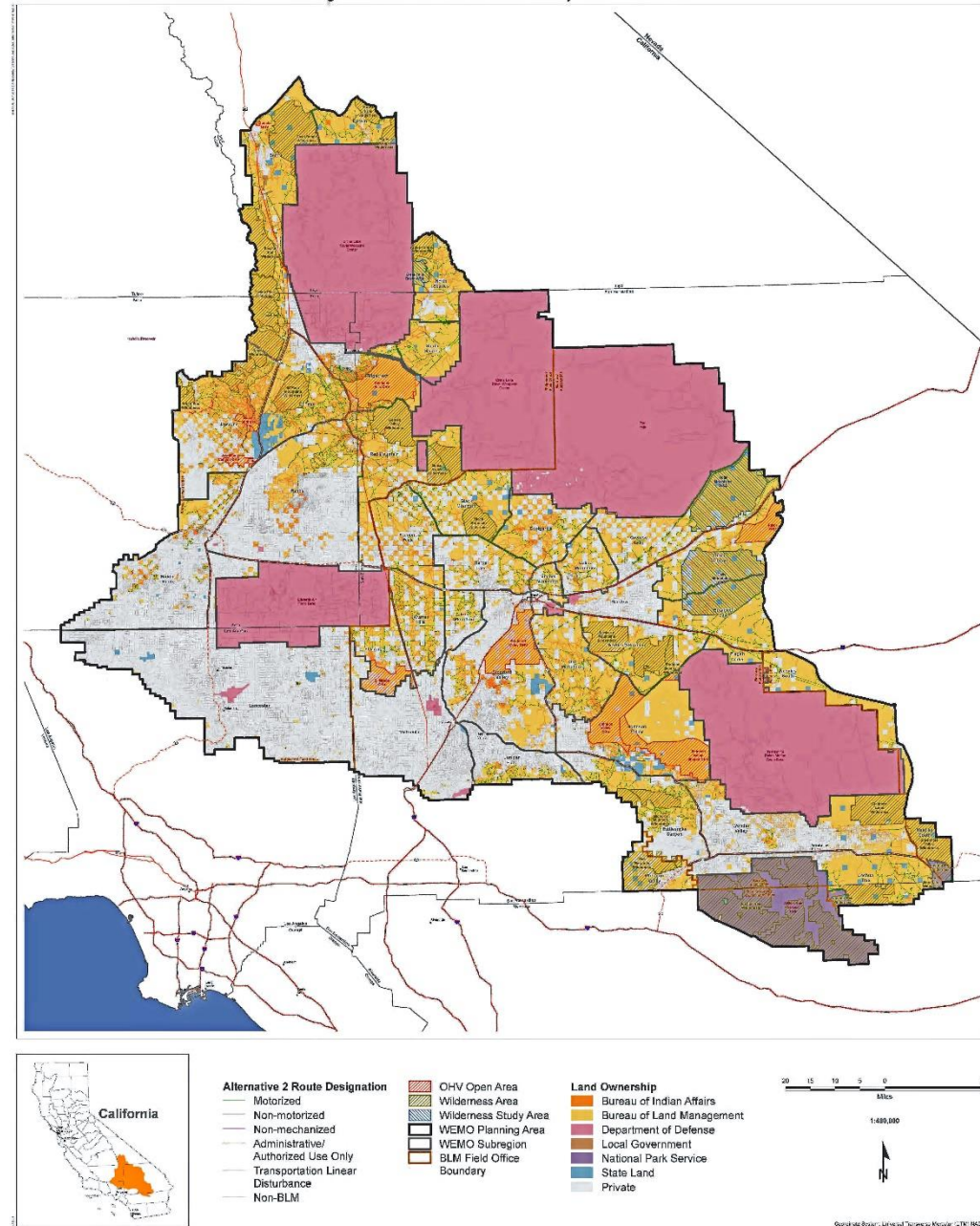
**This is NOT about legal OHV riders and riding**

# WEMO Resource Conservation Enhancement

Alternative 2  
4,242 miles

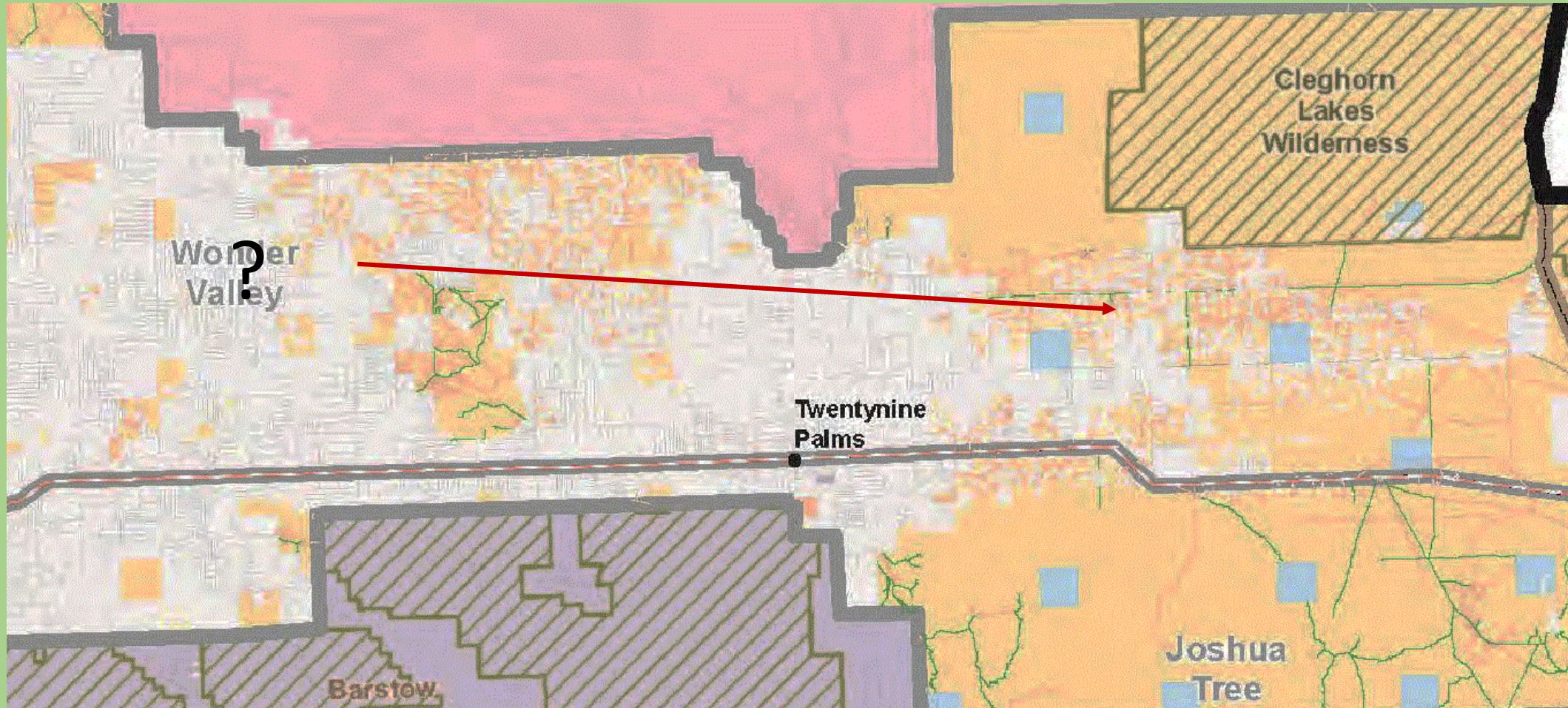
In the  
Morongo  
Basin Alt. 1  
(No Action  
Alt.) & 2 are  
similar

Western Mojave Supplemental EIS  
Figure 2.3-4 Alternative 2 - 2014 West Mojave Route Network





# The Communities of Copper Mountain Mesa, Desert Heights & Wonder Valley



## Alternative 2

Green lines are BLM travel routes open to OHV travel

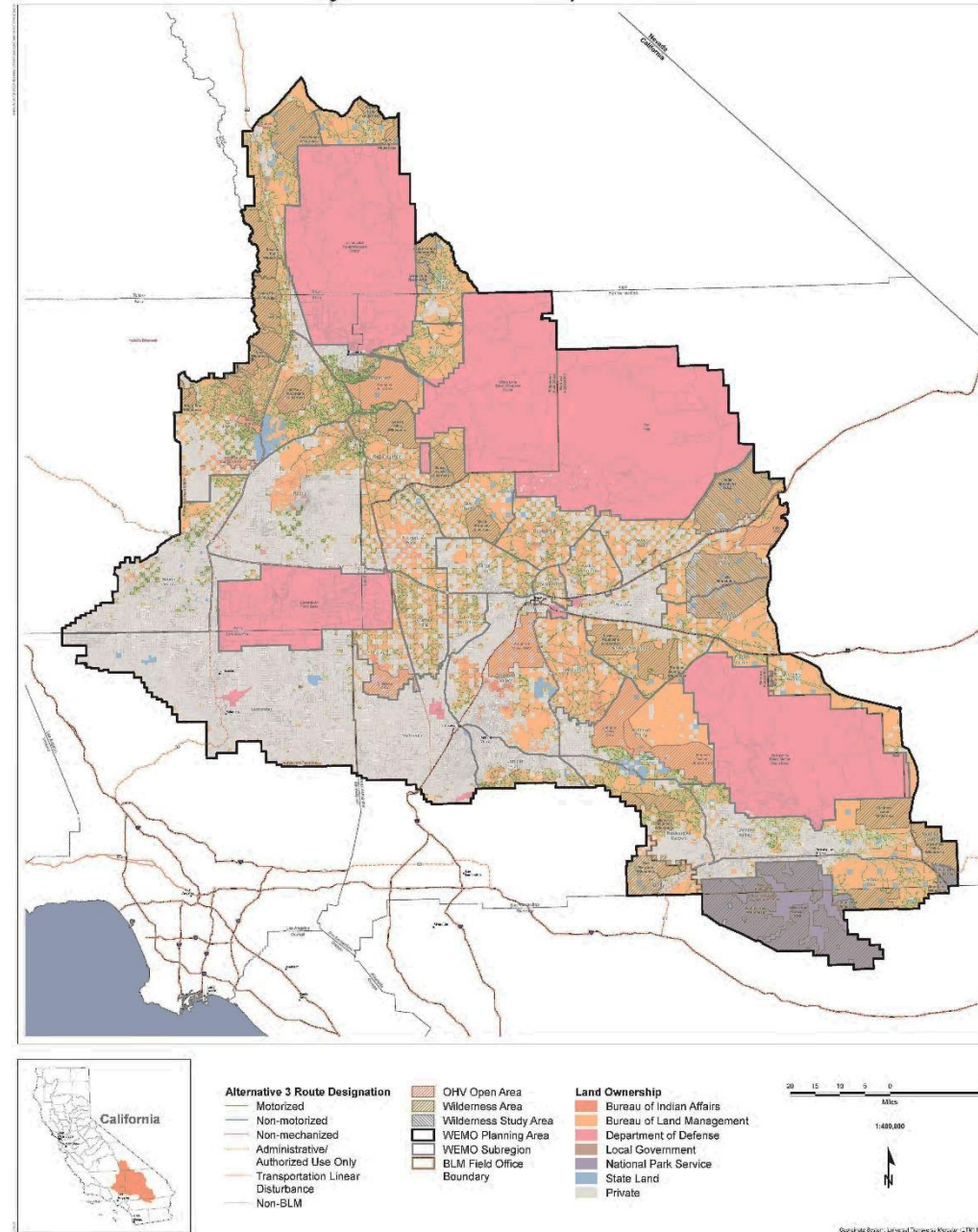


# WEMO Travel Management Network

Alternative 3  
10,428 miles

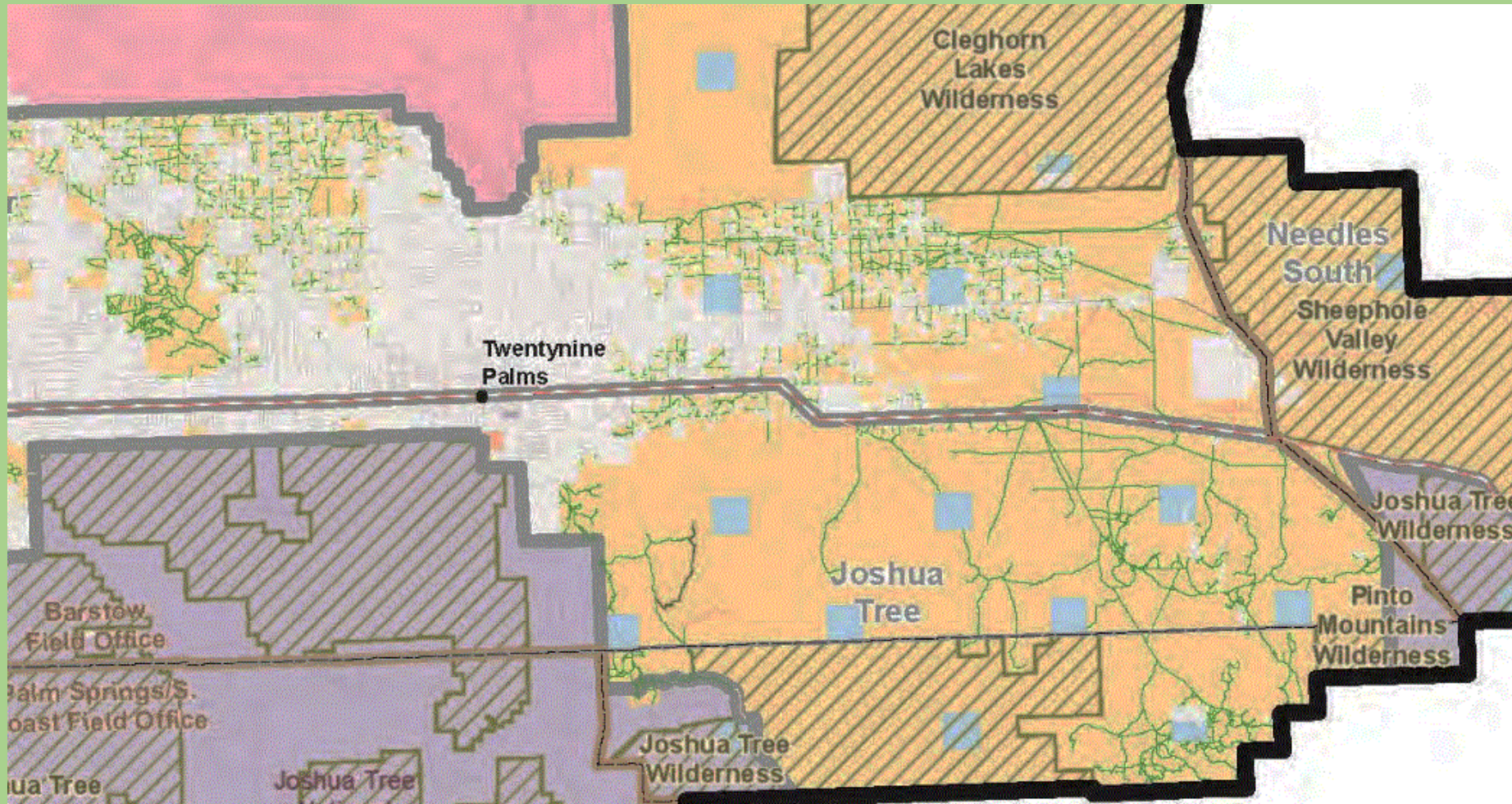
Preferred  
Alternative

Western Mojave Supplemental EIS  
Figure 2.3-5 Alternative 3 - 2014 West Mojave Route Network





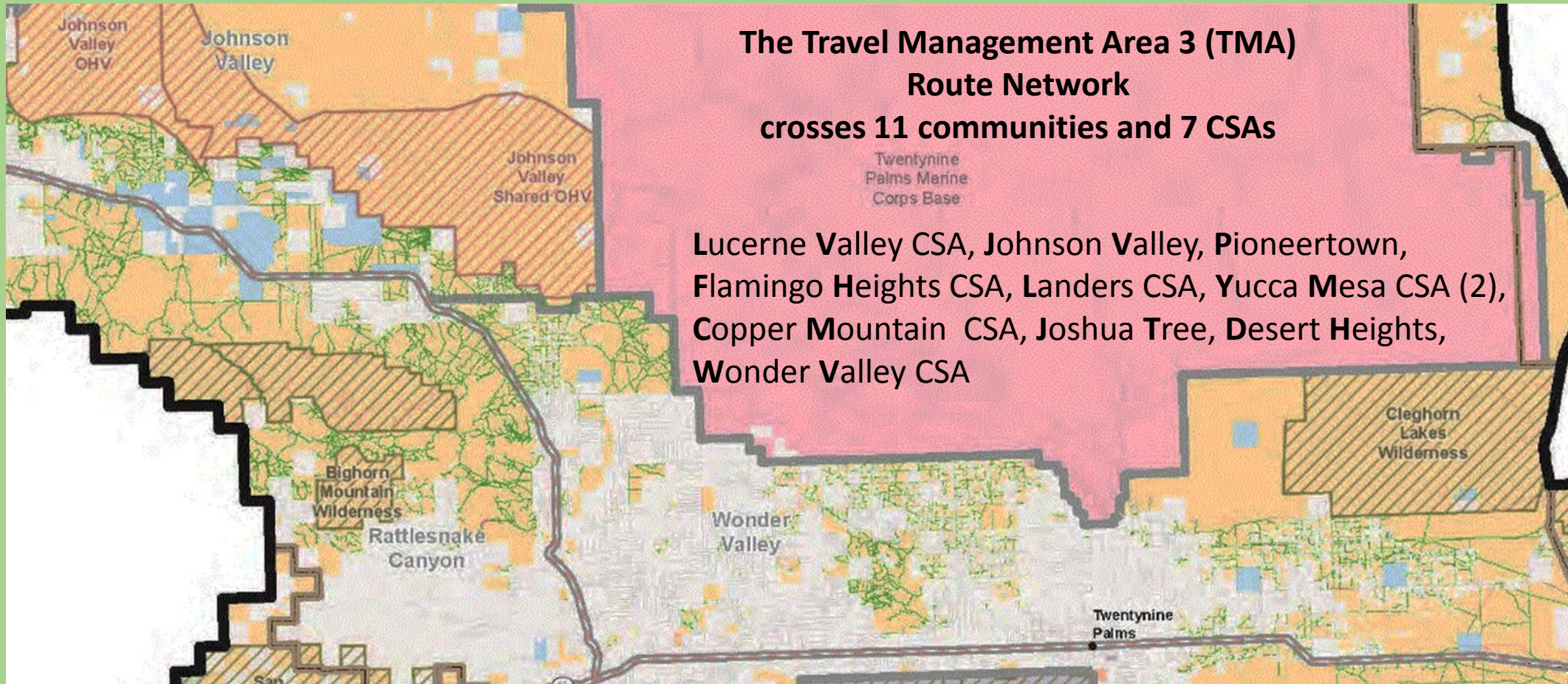
# The Communities of Copper Mountain Mesa, Desert Heights & Wonder Valley



**Alternative 3**

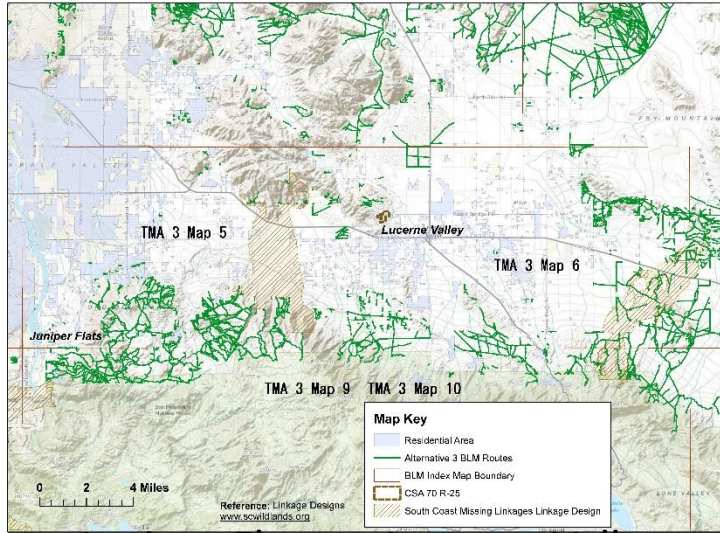


# Gateway Communities to Joshua Tree National Park -

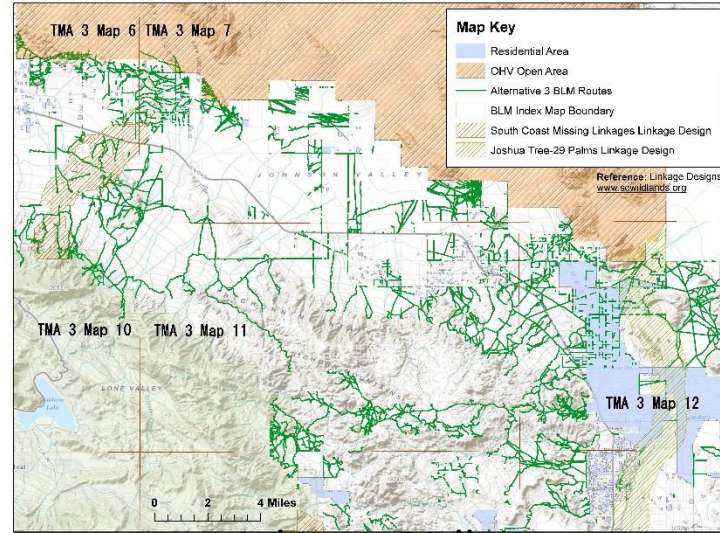


*BLM does **not analyze** for noise, air quality/dust, sensitive receptors, or the socioeconomics effects **on the communities & residents***

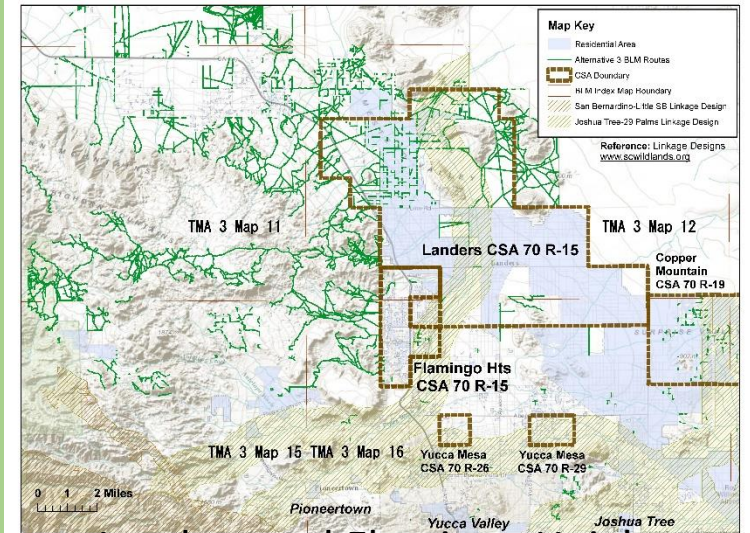




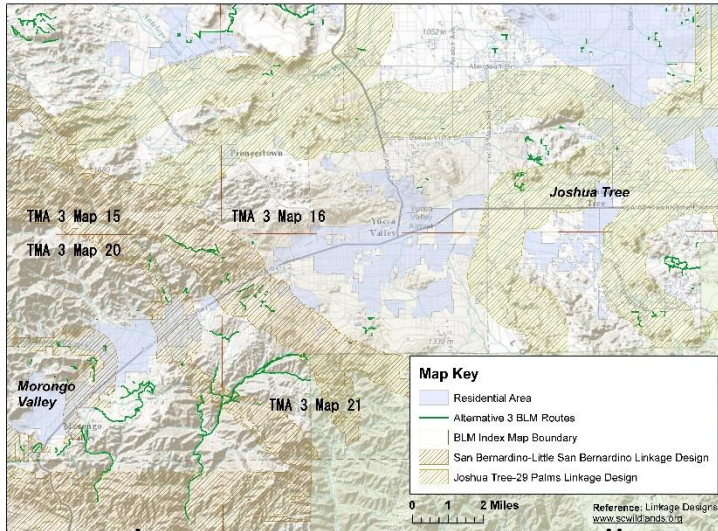
Juniper Flats to Lucerne Valley



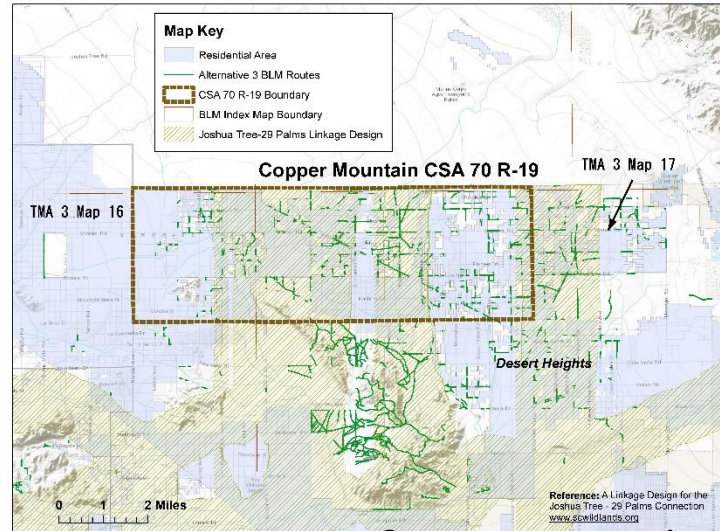
Johnson Valley



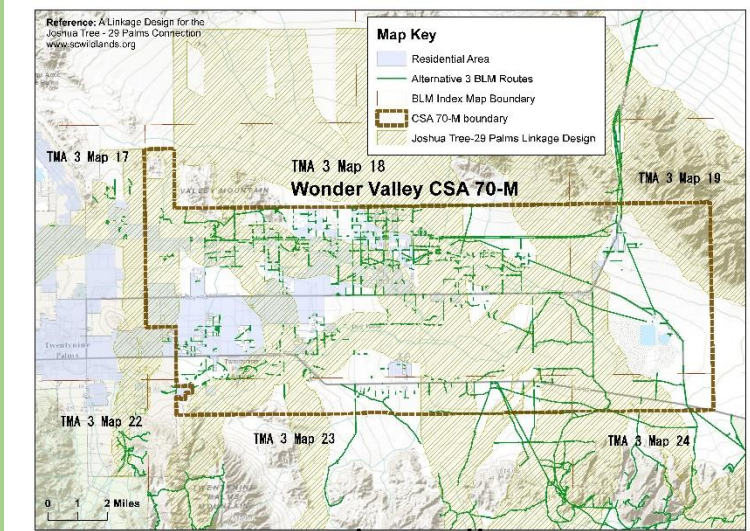
Landers and Flamingo Heights



Joshua Tree to Morongo Valley



Copper Mountain & Deserts Heights



Wonder Valley



## According to the BLM Analysis, Alternative 3

“would have the **largest mileage of motorized routes** available to support recreation. The increase in the mileage of motorized routes would allow recreational users to be more dispersed, increasing their recreational experience...” (WEMO ES-16)

“None of the alternatives would lead to a change in the motorized vehicle use or miles traveled in the planning area.” (WEMO 4.15-2)

*Based on experience, do you believe that a **new** Transportation Route Network, crossing from Juniper Flats to Sheephole Pass, will go unnoticed by the riding public, locally or from out of the area? Or, that we will have no new riders in the future – just dispersed riders?*

“**Publicity** about an area’s recreational opportunity often attracts users. ...The popularity of the web (organizational websites, Facebook) and similar mechanisms to share information have further increased sharing of information about locations and destinations in the desert. Computer apps can ..., and have further expanded the reach of information beyond club members and small groups of individuals. *This promotes discussion about specific areas and facilitates increased recreation at those sites.*” (WEMO 3.6-3)



## And where are those “sites” where new riders won’t be going?

“Located only **90 minutes from downtown Los Angeles**, the WEMO Planning area is the recreational backyard of the metropolitan area’s 21 million residents, of which nearly **2 million participate in OHV activities** and an even greater number camp, hike, or drive for pleasure.

The types of recreation provided in the WEMO Planning area are highly varied. **Due to the vastness, many visitors feel a greater freedom from regulations that encourages them to try new forms of recreation while not having to worry about bothering others.** Given the scale of the desert and this sense of freedom, it is not surprising that many of the **recreational activities centered around vehicles, speed events or activities that require a great deal of acreage and separation from other visitors.** These activities include motorcycle activities, four wheel drive exploring, sightseeing, target shooting, hunting, using experimental vehicles/aircraft, model rocketry, and dry land windsailing.” (See WEMO 3.6-1

Fortunately, these BLM OHV Open areas are available

Dove Springs	5,000 acres
Dumont Dunes	8,150
El Mirage	24,000
Jawbone Canyon	7,000
Johnson Valley	189,000
Rasor	22,500
Spangler Hills	60,000
Stoddard Valley	53,000

They are all vast,  
provide a sense of freedom,  
have varied terrain to explore, no  
one will be bothered, and  
they are located in WEMO.

There are also designated county  
and NFS riding areas.

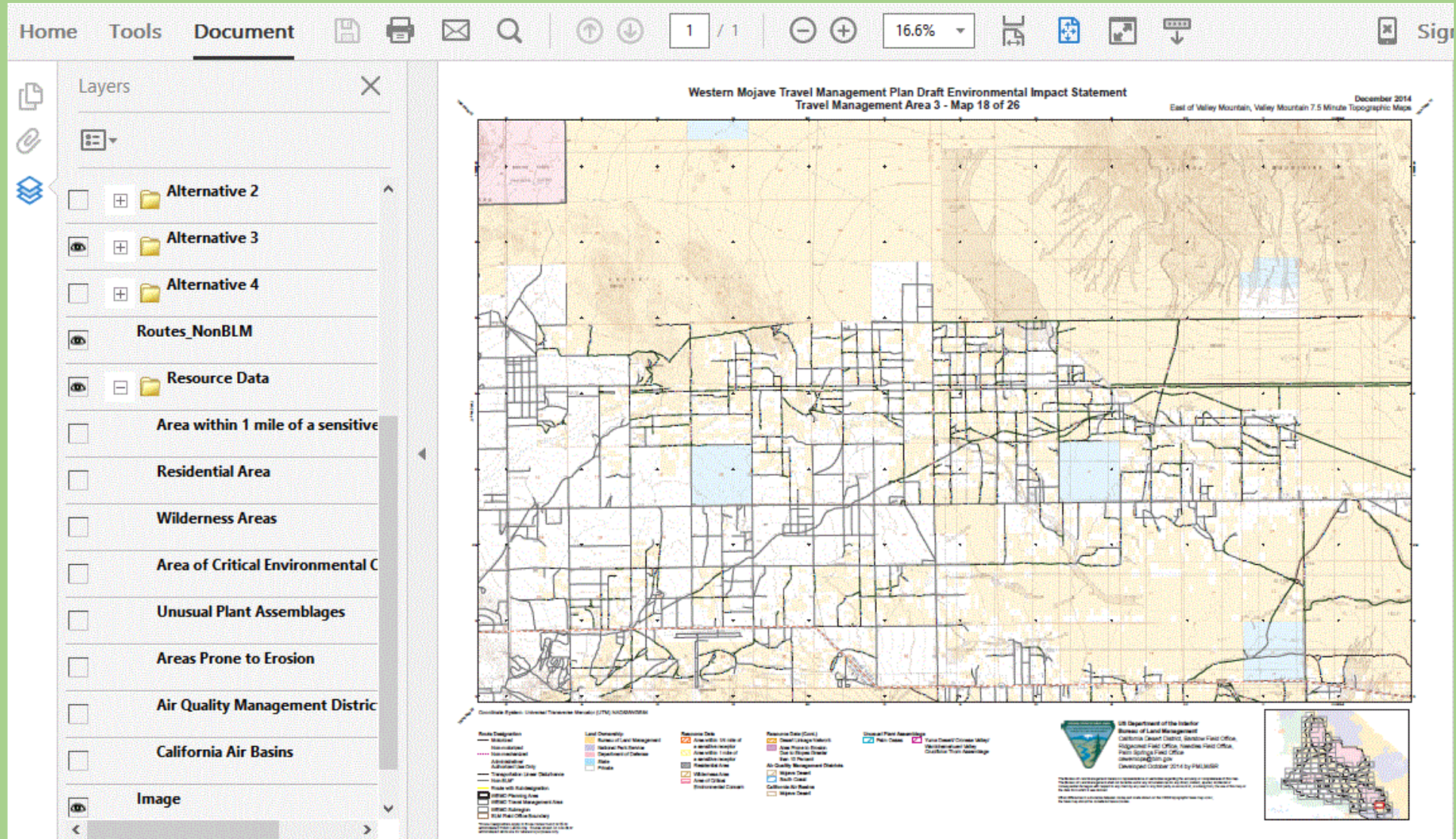
*Riding in designated areas does not disturb the peace and quiet of desert neighborhoods, fill the air with dust, damage roads, lower property values, or discourage the tourism economy.*



# Wonder Valley area

Map opens in  
Alternative 3  
with the BLM  
routes  
connected by  
the count dirt  
roads.

At 16.6% it is impossible to tell if routes are green (open) or red (closed) to OHV travel.



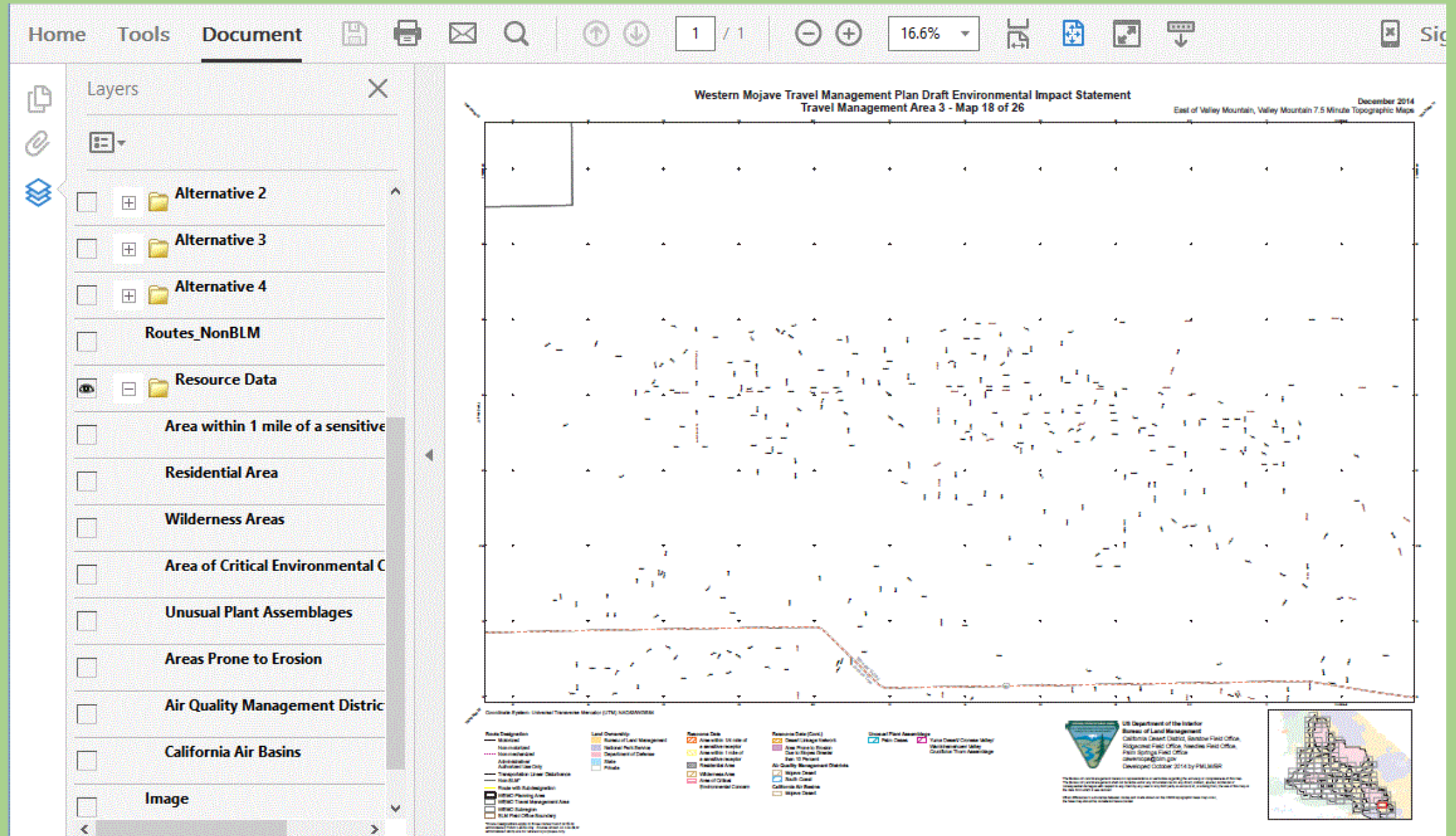


Open  
routes are  
GREEN



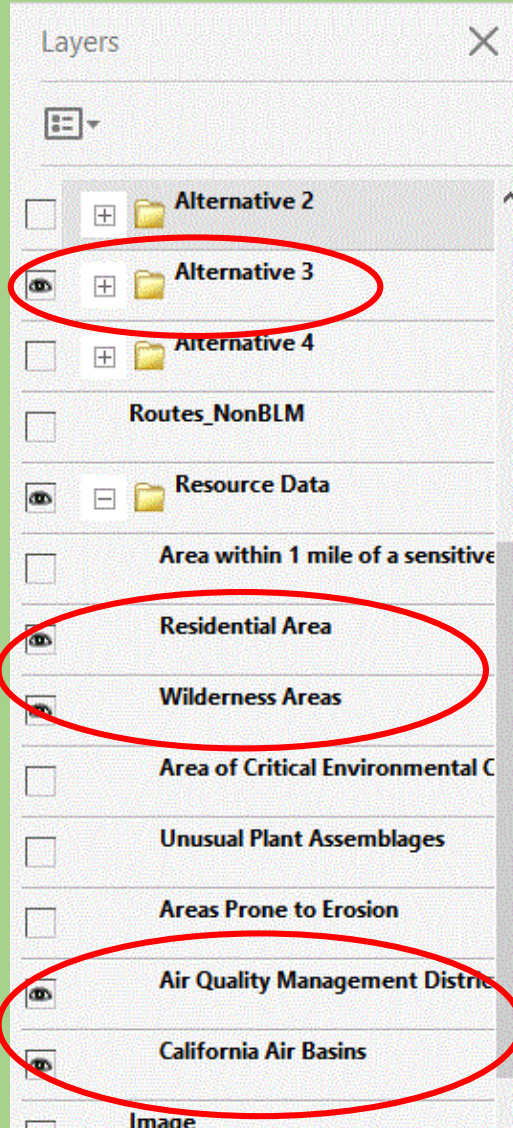


All routes  
should  
have  
numbers

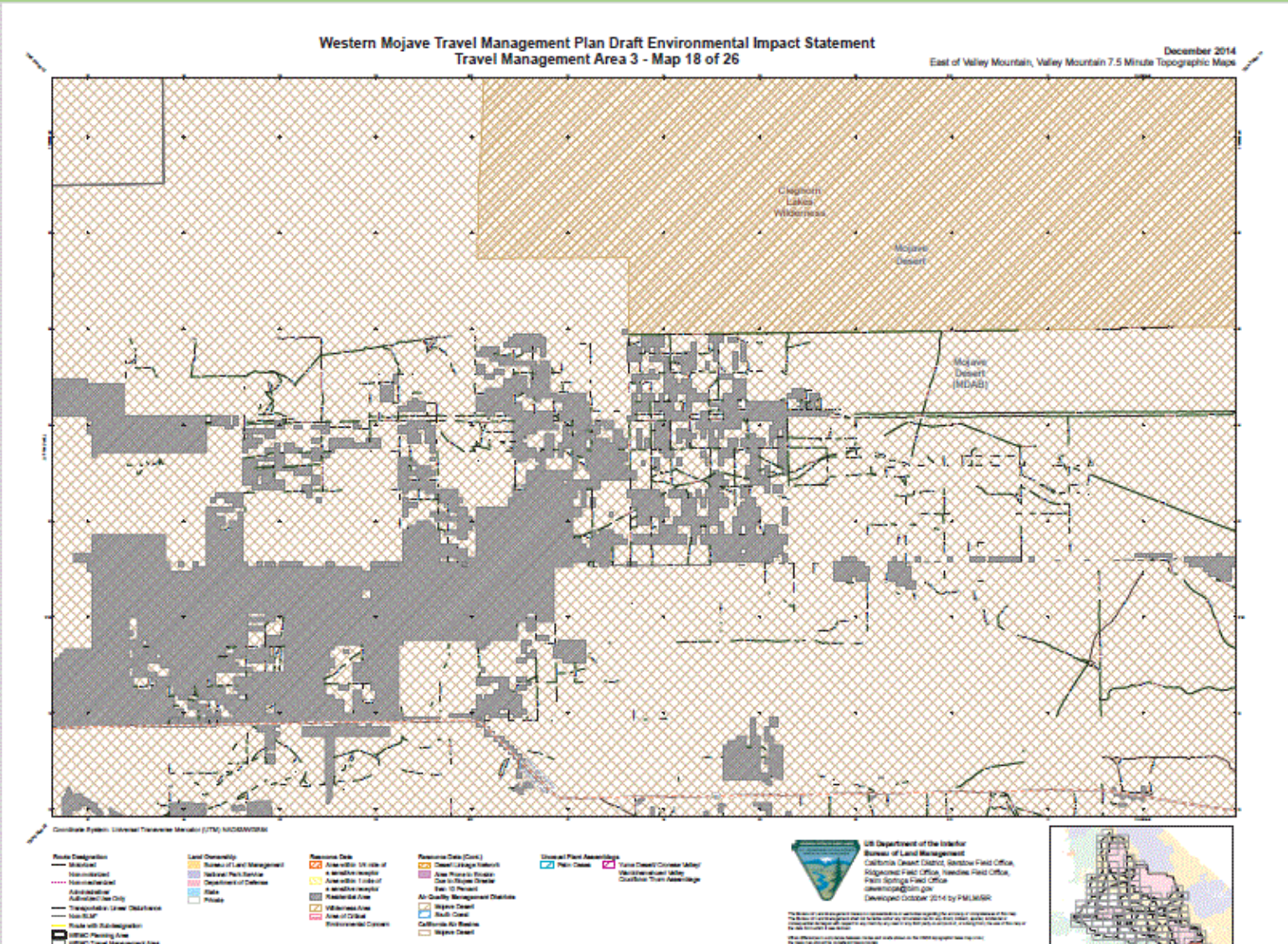




# Alternative 3 – Showing Residential areas, Wilderness & Air Quality Control District



BLM routes are shown with the residential area, Wilderness and Air Quality management





Alts.  
1 & 2

At 75% magnification

Red is not  
open to  
OHV Riding



At 75% magnification

The screenshot shows the ArcGIS Pro interface. On the left is the 'Layers' panel, which contains a list of layers. The layer 'Alternative 3' is highlighted with a red circle. On the right is the map view, which displays a network of green lines representing routes. A red arrow points to a specific segment of the network, labeled 'Orphan route'.



# Alt.3

At 75%  
magnification

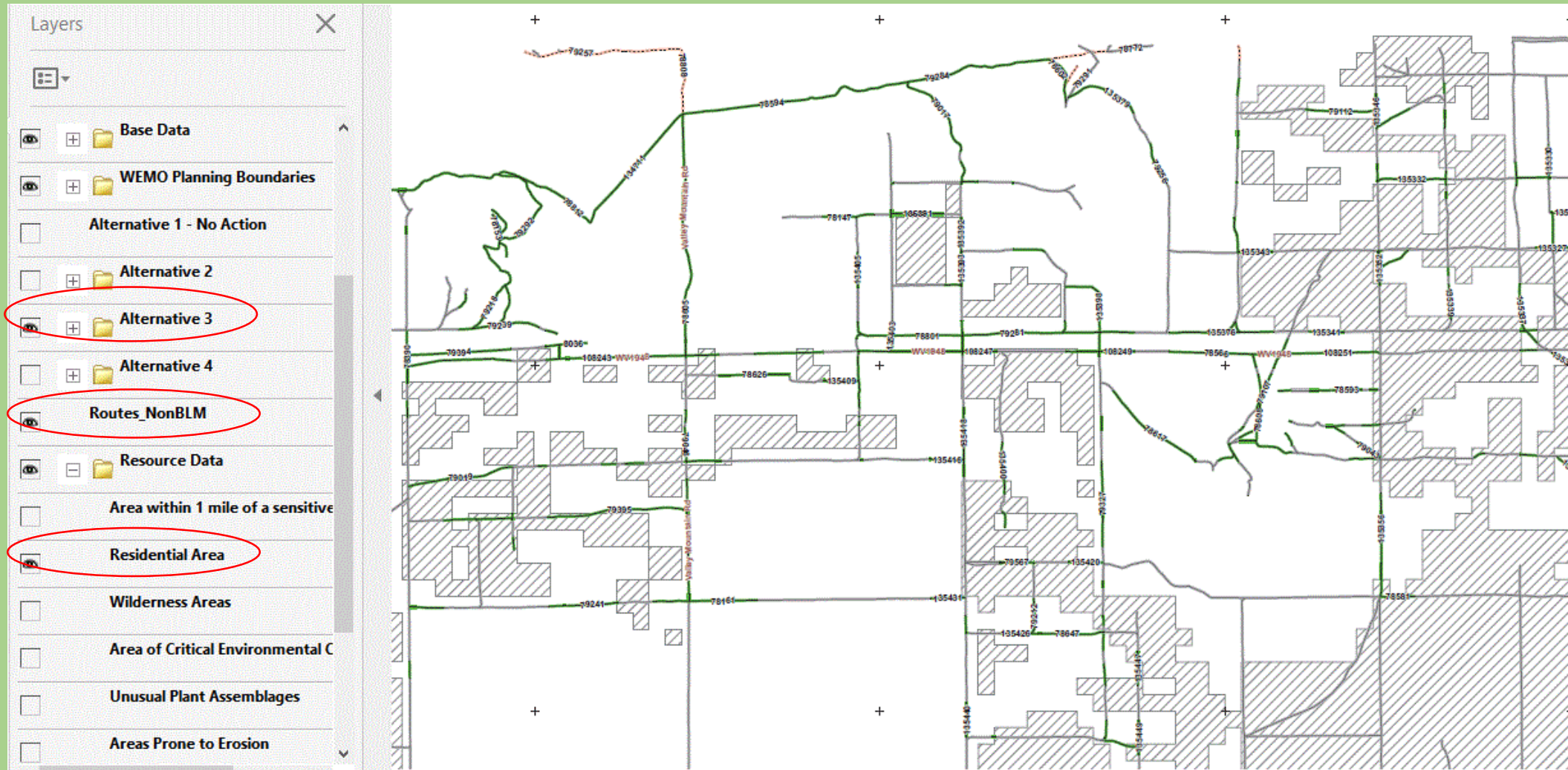
County dirt  
roads connect  
the orphans



# Alt.3

At 75%  
magnification

Blue hatching  
is Residential






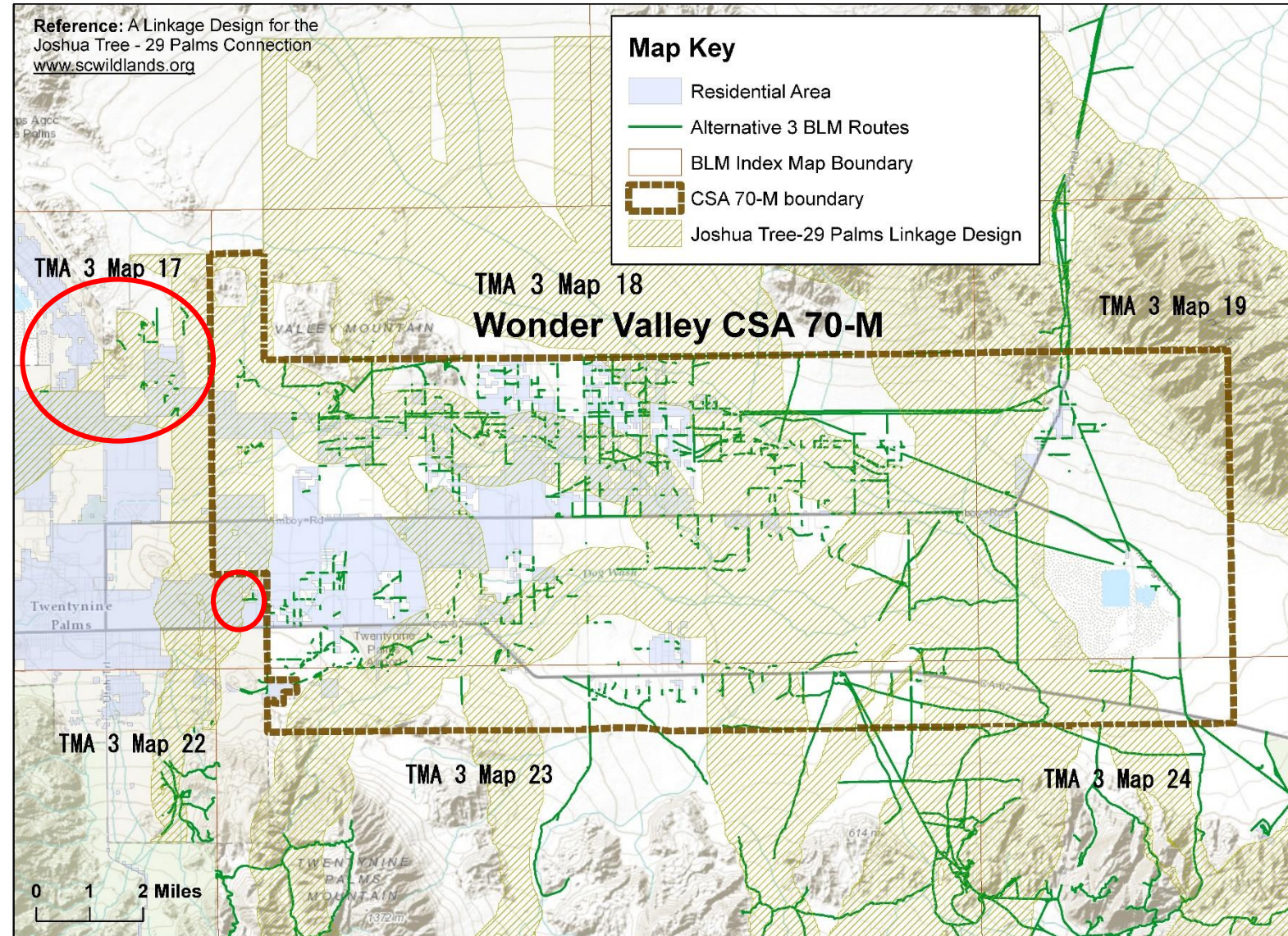
# WONDER VALLEY CSA 70-M

## GIS Files:

BLM, S.B. County (CSA),  
and SC Wildlands (linkage)  
It includes data from 6 of  
the BLM TMA 3 maps

## Features:

- Entire WV area
- Residential (blue)
- CSA 70-M Boundary (brown dashed)
- Wildlife/Ecological Linkage Design (tan hashed )
-  Residential -outside CSA



# Impacts of Alternative 3 – Full disclosure required by the National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA) ( See ES-11-22)

## Air Quality

- **Highest mileage** of routes near *sensitive receptors* and *residences*. Over long term, shows a ***moderate reduction*** in areas that would be *susceptible to fugitive dust* emissions, which would be **less** than other alternatives.

## Noise

- **Largest mileage** within close proximity to sensitive human receptors, residences, and wildlife receptors. **Largest magnitude** of direct and cumulative **adverse impacts** resulting from noise.

## Visual Resources

- **Highest mileage** in most sensitive VRI classes (Class I and II). **Lowest mileage** of closed routes and, therefore, have an **adverse impact** on visual resources.



## Geology, Soil, and Water Resources

- **Highest mileage** in close proximity to *washes, riparian areas, springs, and erosion prone areas*. Would have **largest magnitude** of direct and cumulative **adverse impacts** to geology, soil, and water resources.

## Wildlife

- **Highest mileage** in close proximity to *identified wildlife areas*. It would have the **least proactive minimization measures, least protective goals and objectives**. **Largest magnitude** of direct and cumulative **adverse impacts** to wildlife resources.
- Alternative 3 does not incorporate the **Twentynine Palms-Joshua Tree Linkage Connection as required under NEPA**

## Vegetation

- **Highest mileage** in close proximity to *sensitive vegetation communities, special status plants and UPAs*. It would have the **least proactive minimization measures, least protective goals and objectives**. **Largest magnitude** of direct and cumulative **adverse impacts** to vegetation resources.

## Travel and Transportation Management

- **Widest network** of motorized routes, **maximizing connections** to adjacent jurisdictions and access to private land and authorized uses. There would be a **direct beneficial impact** to travel and transportation management.

## Socioeconomics

- **Largest mileage** of motorized routes available to support recreation and authorized users of BLM land. The increase in the mileage of motorized routes would be a **beneficial impact** to *recreation-focused businesses* and other authorized users.

## Recreation

- **Largest mileage** of motorized routes available to support recreation. The **increase in the mileage of motorized routes would allow recreational users to be more dispersed**, increasing their recreational experience and serving as a **beneficial impact** as compared to the No Action Alternative.



## Special Designations

- Highest mileage in ACECs, DWMAs, Wilderness, and Wilderness Study Areas (WSAs). It would have the least proactive minimization measures, and least protective goals and objectives. Largest magnitude of direct and cumulative adverse impacts on special designation resources.

## Energy Production, Utility Corridors, and Other Land Uses

- Largest mileage available to support access for new authorized *users for energy production, utility corridors, mining communications sites, and other facilities*. There would be a beneficial impact on the operators of these new facilities. Overall impacts to these operations due to other factors would continue to have an adverse cumulative impact to other land uses.

QUESTION: The above analysis references federal lands. However, This plan is “utilizing county roads”, changing communities, & endangering wildlife. What else? Before approval, would a CEQA review be required with San Bernardino County as the lead agency?

# Recap of Alternative 3 impacts, with comments

- **Mileage:** Provides the **widest network** of motorized routes, by **increasing the route mileage 2X** to 10,428, **and claims no change** in the motorized vehicle use or miles traveled in the planning area. *Contradicted by the description of the influence of social media (slide 12).*
- **Recreation:** Claims recreational users will be **more dispersed** increasing their experience, a beneficial impact. *Contradicted by their description of the influence of social media (slide 12).*
- **Climate Change:** No change in direct or indirect GHG emissions from motorized vehicles. See both of the above. *Can this be so? See above.*
- **Environment:** Requires the **least proactive minimization measures, the least protective goals and objectives**, with the **largest magnitude of direct and indirect adverse impacts** on: wildlife, vegetation, special designation areas, washes, riparian areas, riparian areas, springs, erosion prone areas, and special designation areas. ***Violates 43 CFR 8342.1 Minimization Criteria***
  - Areas shall be located to minimize damage to soil, watershed, vegetation, air or other resources of public lands.



# Ignored Entirely – Our Tourism Economy

**Morongo Basin Communities are gateway** to Joshua Tree National Park (JTNP), the Mojave National Preserve, and other scenic public lands

- 2014 JTNP Economic Benefit = **\$97 million** – the \$\$\$ enrich the communities because they stay locally, supporting residents, businesses, and jobs;
- Tourism based communities are geographically isolated and individuals have few alternative job choices.

Data: 2014 National Parks Visitor Spending Effects Natural Resource Report

NPS/NRSS/EQD/NRR— 2015/947

## Why do visitors come?

- |                                   |     |
|-----------------------------------|-----|
| ○ Views without development       | 90% |
| ○ Clean Air                       | 89% |
| ○ Natural Quiet, sounds of nature | 87% |
| ○ Desert plants/wildlife          | 83% |
| ○ Native wildlife                 | 81% |
| ○ Solitude                        | 73% |
| ○ Dark, starry night skies        | 65% |

Data: University of Idaho Visitor Use Study – Winter 2010

## And, they can decide to go elsewhere?

**If the amenities are not there.**

# Take away points - tell the BLM

- In TMA 3 there are 11 communities and 7 CSAs. All property owners pay taxes. Those in CSAs pay additional taxes for road maintenance. **The BLM must analyze the cost to residents.**  
Lucerne Valley CSA, Johnson Valley, Pioneertown, Flamingo Heights CSA, Landers CSA, Yucca Mesa CSA (2), Copper Mountain CSA, Joshua Tree, Desert Heights, Wonder Valley CSA
- BLM routes are mostly segments - orphan routes - that imply an invitation to trespass on private property and into Wilderness, the MCAGCC, JTNP, and the National Forest. Trespass **promotes conflict** with land owners and other users and **threatens** wildlife and sensitive plant communities. *See WEMO 2014 maps, SEIS Planning Criteria Page 1-14, and Purpose and Need Framework (slide 4)*
- The use of the County's rural residential roads **violates** the San Bernardino County **OHV Ordinance 28.040**, which seeks to protect residential neighborhoods from the effects of OHV use such as noise, dust, smoke, and fumes. (See Ordinance 3973 -2006 and Ordinance 28.040 – 2010).
- The BLM has not consulted with the County Supervisors, Land Use Services, the Sheriff, or Code enforcement to ensure compatibility with county goals and objectives. Such consultation is a specific requirement to the WEMO Route Network Plan. *See 2015 WEMO SEIS Planning Criteria, Page 1-14.*



# More

- The **Federal designation of ORV routes** occurs in such a way that the **county roads become ORV routes**. This **forever changes their use** both as to numbers of vehicles, types of vehicles, and the personal goals of the new ORV traffic.
- Real estate sellers are required by law to disclose material externalities that affect the use and enjoyment of their lands. The WEMO Transportation Network would be such an externality.
- This externality will adversely affect private property values and, by extension, tax revenues.
- This breadth of the Transportation Network, across the west Mojave and through communities, will encourage real estate sales persons to reinvigorate the “Buy land cheap – bring your toys” strategy. **This will forever change the character of our rural communities.**
- In the Final EIS, BLM must include the ***Twentynine Palms – Joshua Tree Linkage Design*** in their environmental analysis
- In the Final EIS BLM must **calculate** in their socioeconomic analysis **all unfunded costs** to the property owners and the county

# Finally

**In conclusion** – The BLM WEMO Transportation Route Network Plan is in violation of 43 CFR 8342.1b and 1c Minimization Criteria

- 1b Areas and trails shall be located to minimize harassment of wildlife or significant disruption of wildlife habitats. Special attention will be given to protect endangered or threatened species and their habitats.
- 1c Areas and trails shall be located to minimize conflicts between off-road vehicle use and other existing or proposed recreational uses of the same or neighboring public lands, **and to ensure the compatibility of such uses with existing conditions in populated areas, taking into account noise and other factors.**



## We have inherited the legacy of our homesteading history

- Rural desert communities are checker boarded with parcels of public land.
- The BLM, the public land manager, is hampered in its mission by private land parcels under the control of other jurisdictions.

### What to do?

When planning within rural communities, where people live, all BLM routes connected by county roads must be designated **open to street-legal vehicles only** and recognized **with a unique color on maps.**

**Routes in washes, the highways of wildlife linkages, should be designated closed to off-road vehicles.**

# What to do now

- Final comments must be submitted by June 4, 2015

Submit by email to [cawemopa@blm.gov](mailto:cawemopa@blm.gov) or by mail to:

Bureau of Land Management

California Desert District

Attn: WMRNP Plan Amendment

22835 Calle San Juan de Los Lagos

Moreno Valley, CA 92553



# The WEMO SEIS Documents and Maps

- The BLM WEMO Draft EIS website

[http://www.blm.gov/ca/st/en/fo/cdd/west\\_mojave\\_wemo.html](http://www.blm.gov/ca/st/en/fo/cdd/west_mojave_wemo.html)

- The Community ORV Watch (COW)

<http://www.orvwatch.com/?q=node/9>

- This PowerPoint is available on the COW website and the MBCA website <http://www.mbconservation.org/>

- Comment letters are due no later than June 4, 2015.