

California Desert District

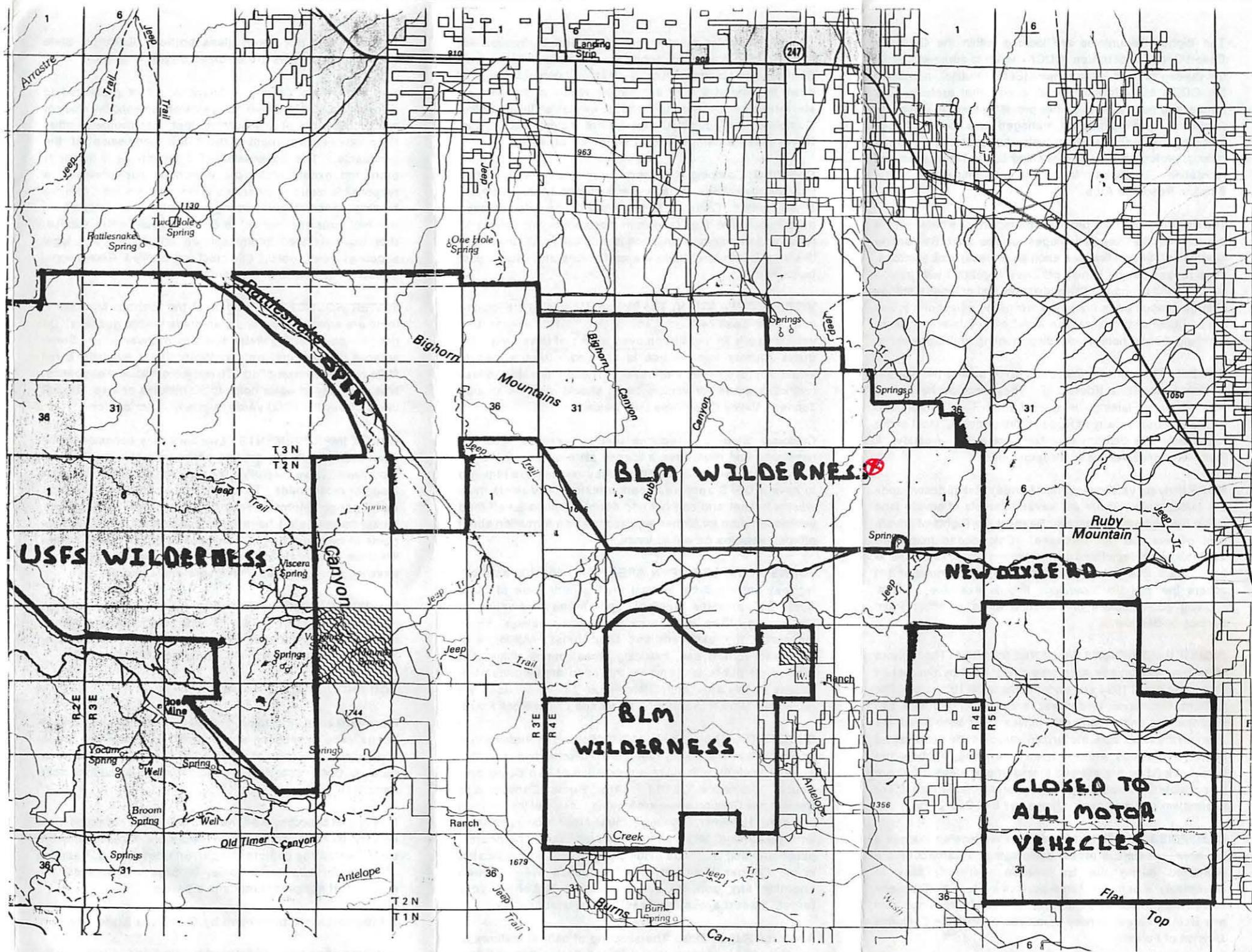
The Bighorn Mountains

An informational guide

Bureau of Land Management



CALIFORNIA DESERT CONSERVATION
AREA
BUREAU OF LAND MANAGEMENT
UNITED STATES
DEPARTMENT OF THE INTERIOR



The Bighorn Mountains are located within the California Desert Conservation Area (CDCA) which is administered by the Bureau of Land Management (BLM). Public lands within the CDCA are administered in a way that protects their natural and cultural values while providing for wise use of the resources. Public lands are managed for a variety of uses including wildlife conservation, watershed protection, grazing, mining, protection of wilderness and cultural resources and recreation. The Bighorn Mountains are administered by the Barstow Resource Area.

The Bighorn Mountains provide a transition zone between the desert and the forested slopes of the San Bernardino Mountains. Scenic features such as unusual rock outcrops, deep rugged canyons, high plateaus vegetated with pinyon pine, colorful spring wildflower displays and extensive stands of large Joshua trees are just a few of the attractions in this area. Some of the recreation activities in this area include camping, hiking, horseback riding, hunting and sightseeing.

ACCESS: There are several roads which access the Bighorn Mountains for State Route 247. These include New Dixie Mine Road in Flamingo Heights, Larrea Road in Johnson Valley and Burns Canyon Road in Pioneertown. Most of the roads within the Bighorn Mountains are rough or sandy. A four-wheel drive vehicle is recommended.

MAPS (Private vs. Government Lands): Not all desert lands are public lands. There are several parcels of private land within the Bighorn Mountains. Respect the Rights of private land owners; do not trespass. Color-coded maps are available which depict land ownership and agency administration. The Yucca Valley Desert Access Guide (number 14) covers the Bighorn Mountains and is available at local sporting goods stores or the BLM office in either Palm Springs or Barstow.

BIGHORN MOUNTAINS WILDERNESS AREA: The Bighorn Mountains Wilderness Area was designated by the Desert Protection Act of 1994 and encompasses 39,185 acres. The Bighorn Mountains Wilderness area is divided into two sections, one on the north side of New Dixie Mine Road, the other on the south side. Motorized vehicles are not allowed within wilderness areas. Hiking, camping, hunting and horseback riding are allowed in wilderness areas. You are responsible for knowing where wilderness boundaries are. For information on wilderness, please call 619-256-2729.

CAMPFIRES: The Bighorn Mountains are located in stage II fire area. In stage II areas, campfires and barbecues are prohibited during the fire season (generally May to November). Controlled flame devices such as portable gas stoves are allowed by permit. Permits can be obtained from any BLM or Forest Service employee or from the California Division of Forestry.

During the winter months, campfires and barbecues are allowed without a permit, subject to a few stipulations. Only build fires in an area which is clear of flammable material down to mineral soil for a minimum radius of five feet. A shovel or other tool must be handy to extinguish the campfire. Completely extinguish all fires before leaving a campsite. Never leave a campfire unattended by an adult!

CAMPING: Camping is allowed throughout the area subject to a few restrictions. Camping is limited to 14 days within a 28 day period. Carry out all trash and refuse. Do not leave trash in campfire rings (aluminum does not burn). Driving off roads and damaging vegetation is prohibited. All camping in this area is primitive; there are no facilities and water must be carried in.

VEHICLE OPERATION: The Bighorn Mountains are located in a area classified for "Limited Use." This means that vehicle use is limited to approved routes of travel only. No cross-country vehicle use is allowed. (Use a map to locate approved routes of travel.) Those interested in less restrictive areas for vehicle travel should visit the nearby Johnson Valley Open Area (see below).

California State law requires that all vehicles must be registered and must have a license plate or "green sticker" displayed. Additionally, all off-highway vehicles are required to have a USFS approved spark arrestor. ATV riders must wear a helmet and can not ride double. Obtain an off-road vehicle handout for further regulations and information about off-road vehicles on public lands.

JOHNSON VALLEY OPEN AREA: This 154,700 acre off-highway vehicle area, located on the north side of State Route 247, provides excellent opportunities for a variety of OHV riding. The open area hosts open valleys, steep mountains, dry lake beds and sand dunes. All forms of motorized vehicle use, including cross-country riding, are allowed on public lands within the open area boundaries. Access to this area from State Route 247 is provided via Bessemer Mine Road, Boone Road and Camp Rock Road.

SHOOTING: The majority of the Bighorn Mountains are located within a shotgun only area. Discharging any rifle, pistol or shotgun with slugs is a violation of San Bernardino County Ordinance 22.011. The Burns Canyon and Rattlesnake Canyon areas are located outside of the shotgun only area. However, shooting in these areas is only permitted for legal hunting; target shooting is prohibited. The nearest public land that is outside of the shotgun only area is located in the Copper Mountain area of Joshua Tree. When shooting any gun, be aware of what is behind your target. Desert areas are heavily populated!

Additional Regulations: The shooting of natural features or any property belonging to the United States is prohibited. Target materials and spent cartridges must be picked up and

removed. Do not shoot glass bottles. California State assault weapon laws are enforced on public lands.

San Bernardino County Ordinances: It is prohibited to discharge a firearm within 150 yards of domestic livestock or within 150 yards of any building, tent, motorhome or other temporary encampment without the permission of the occupants. The possession of a firearm by a minor is prohibited except under the immediate supervision of a responsible adult or when the minor has a valid California hunting license. Night shooting in this area is prohibited from one-half hour after sunset to one-half hour before sunrise. (For more detailed information on regulations and legal shooting areas, obtain the brochure entitled *Recreational Shooting Areas in San Bernardino County*.)

WATER SOURCES: Throughout the Bighorn Mountains, there are small springs and man-made wildlife guzzlers. Do not plan on obtaining water from any of these sites. Some sources of water may be dry. Water that is available is not fit for human consumption. To minimize wildlife disturbance, limit your stay at water holes to 30 minutes or less. Do not camp closer than 200 yards from any water source.

RANGE IMPROVEMENTS: Livestock may occasionally be seen roaming on the grazing allotment within the Bighorn Mountains. Drive carefully in these areas as cattle often walk along or cross roads. To control and water these livestock, many range improvements (fences, gates, cattleguards, tanks, troughs etc.) have been constructed. Respect the rights of ranchers by following these rules: Do not harass livestock. Do not camp near water improvements. When traveling through gates, make sure and close the gate.

MINING ACTIVITIES: All mining operations and activities must conform with the Title 43 CFR 3802/3809 regulations and the California Desert Conservation Area Plan. Further information may be obtained by calling 619-255-8700.

YOU SHOULD ALSO KNOW.....

Plant collection, including firewood collection, requires a permit. The exceptions are for small collections of annual wildflowers, collection of ornamental dead plant material for personal use or collection of dead and down wood for on-site campfires.

Hobby rock collecting is allowed; however, the collecting must be done by hand or with simple hand tools. Only reasonable quantities may be gathered for personal collections. Removal of rocks for commercial sale, in large amounts or with mechanical equipment requires a permit.

All fireworks are prohibited by California State law.

Dumping of garbage or sewage is prohibited. Avoid burning trash and never bury it. Pack it in- Pack it out!

Historical and archaeological sites are protected under Federal law. Destruction or disturbance of these cultural resources deprives others of a unique experience and an irreplaceable part of their heritage. The Archaeologic Resources Protection Act makes it a felony violation to disturb these sites.

The Desert tortoise population is declining. Laws have been passed to protect the desert tortoise. It is illegal to collect, harm, shoot, sell, purchase or harass a desert tortoise. You can help protect tortoises from being run over by vehicles. If you see a tortoise in a roadway, note the direction that it is headed. Carry it carefully across the road in the same direction and into the desert a short distance. Carry the tortoise upright, in its normal walking position; don't tip it from side to side or turn it upside down. (If a tortoise becomes frightened, it may empty its bladder, thus losing its precious storage of water.)

HAZARDS-MINES: Abandoned mines and open mine shafts are common in the desert. They are extremely dangerous. Poisonous gases within mines and open shafts constitute life threatening hazards. The walls and surface area around shafts are usually unstable. Never go into any open shaft or tunnel!

YOU CAN HELP! Violations of these laws and regulations impact the quality of your public lands. If you witness any of the following acts on public lands, please report the vehicle description, license number or other descriptive information to a BLM ranger or BLM office.

- * People digging or damaging historical or archaeological sites.
- * People unloading drums or containers.
- * People dumping household trash, garbage or sewage.
- * People vandalizing or shooting at signs, fences or guzzlers.
- * People setting fire to vegetation.
- * People painting or defacing rocks or other natural features.
- * People cutting down or digging up trees, shrubs, cactus or other vegetation.
- * People driving off the established roads, in wilderness or in closed areas.

San Bernardino National Forest: The National Forest borders the Bighorn Mountains to the west. For National Forest information call 909-866-3437.

PHONE NUMBERS:

EMERGENCIES: DIAL 911

24 Hour BLM law enforcement or fire: 909-383-5651
Yucca Valley Resident Ranger: 619-365-0955
General information about public lands: 619-255-8700
California Desert Information Center 619-256-8313
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