



National Park Service
U.S. Department of the Interior

Mojave NPRes
Date: 09/22/2009

Categorical Exclusion Form

Project: Improve Safety and Effectiveness of Hole-in-the-Wall Helispot
Project ID: 09-MOJA-052/PEPC 28051

Project Description: The Hole-in-the-Wall (HIW) helispot currently serves as the main helispot for most park helicopter operations. The helispot is located just north of the main entrance to the HIW fire facility.

It is necessary to make improvements to HIW helispot to meet the requirements of the Interagency Helicopter Operations Guide (IHOG). In 2009 an interagency Air Operations Review conducted a complete review of air operations for Mojave NP. At the recommendation of the Air Operations Review, this project proposes to provide a 20 foot x 20 foot concrete helipad to eliminate health and safety and other operational problems due to flying dirt, gravel and rocks generated by heavy helicopter rotor wash from existing dirt and gravel surfaces. The helispot is utilized by rotor-wing aircraft engaged in mountain search and rescue, medical evacuations (medivacs), wildland fire, and in support of other park operations. Park staff will do the work.

Benefits to be gained include increased health and safety for helicopter and ground crew personnel from dependable paved surfaces, and reduced airborne debris from rotor wash. Loading and unloading personnel, cargo and patients will be safer and more secure. Paving will enhance containment of potential aviation fuel spills. If the project is not approved heavy helicopter rotor wash (exceeding 100 MPH) will continue to result in dust and other airborne debris.

Project Location:

Location

County: San Bernardino

State: CA

District: Hole-in-the Wall

Section: Interagency Fire Center

Geo. Marker:

Other:

Mitigation(s):

- **Desert Tortoise/Construction:** Operators of heavy equipment (e.g., road graders) shall be accompanied by a qualified biologist when working in desert tortoise habitat during desert tortoise active periods (March 1 to October 31). The qualified biologist shall walk in front of the equipment during its operation, and shall function as the field contact representative. S/he has the responsibility and authority to halt all project activity should danger to a desert tortoise arise. Work may proceed only after all hazards to the desert tortoise are removed, the desert tortoise is no longer at risk, or the desert tortoise has been moved from harm's way by a biologist authorized by the US Fish & Wildlife Service. During desert tortoise inactive periods (November 1 through February 28/29), an onsite monitor is not required but the equipment operator shall be a qualified biologist. Otherwise, the operator shall be accompanied by a qualified biologist.
- **Desert Tortoise/Construction:** Staging area(s) must be identified in advance of the project, and surveyed for desert tortoise sign before the project begins.
- **Desert Tortoise/Construction:** The project site must be surveyed to locate and remove desert tortoises prior the start of the project. The survey shall be conducted by an authorized biologist within 24 hours of the onset of surface disturbance (grading and other road repairs). The biologist must be authorized by the US Fish & Wildlife Service to survey and handle tortoises for this project.

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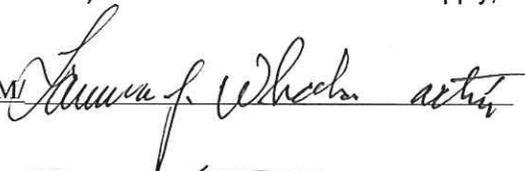
Describe the category used to exclude action from further NEPA analysis and indicate the number of the category (see Section 3-4 of DO-12):

C.18 Construction of minor structures, including small improved parking lots, in previously disturbed or developed areas.

Mojave National Preserve staff has completed an interdisciplinary review of the proposed action. Reviewers did not identify any significant adverse impacts to the natural or cultural resources of Mojave National Preserve. The proposed action will take place within the existing helispot footprint, and will not result in new disturbance to the natural and cultural resources of the Park. This location is within desert tortoise critical habitat; therefore, desert tortoise protective measures must be implemented (see Mitigations). The Environmental Review concluded with no significant adverse impacts to the natural and cultural resources of Mojave National Preserve from the proposed action. Therefore, impairment is not expected to result from this project.

On the basis of the environmental impact information in the statutory compliance file, with which I am familiar, I am categorically excluding the described project from further NEPA analysis. No exceptional circumstances (e.g. all boxes in the ESF are marked "no") or conditions in Section 3-6 apply, and the action is fully described in Section 3-4 of DO-12.

Park Superintendent / Date: DENNIS SCHRAMM



NPS Contact Person: DANETTE WOO



Title: Environmental Compliance Specialist

Telephone number: (760) 252-6107