

MIDDLE GILA CANYONS TRAVEL MANAGEMENT PLANNING
Notes, Workshop II - April 7th, 2007

Discussion of “Map 5”: Introduction by Francisco Mendoza, BLM

During Workshop I, when we dealt with Map 4, there were concerns expressed that the lumping of the three alternatives together was flawed. Some routes were being considered open for administrative access only, but were shown as open on Map 4. This confused the issue somewhat, since the interpretation by some was that they were open to the public in all alternatives. After querying the data on the alternative designation strategies from the MGCP route evaluation to see where these distinctions were, it turned out there was only one route that was recommended for administrative access only (this is the haul road from the Mineral Mountain Mine, off Cottonwood Canyon Road). Map 5 shows as OPEN only those routes that were open to the public in all alternatives; it does not highlight the blue (undecided) routes that can sometimes cause confusion. The differences between Maps 4 and 5 are not that great. For now we are setting aside Map 4 and looking at green routes only, and there really should not be much disagreement on these green routes. This morning, we want to focus on discussing to what extent you are in agreement about the green routes, and also want to identify any remaining disagreement or uncertainty about this updated “Map 5.”

To clarify, Map 5 was made to break down the green routes to see the distinction between administrative access and public access. This was done at the request of the group at the last workshop. Map 5 does not show the routes classified as “limited.” (L or ML common to all the MGCP route evaluation alternatives) It only shows open routes (O and MO common to all the MGCP route evaluation alternatives). What the “limited” means is that it is closed to some people some of the time. Map 5 also shows the closed routes common to all the MGCP route evaluation alternatives only.

There are also some other minor differences from Map 4. We took off the BLM interdisciplinary team’s preliminary designations closing the access “squeeze” to Upper Woodpecker and the closed designation for Lower Woodpecker. We also took off the preliminary BLM designation for Jawbreaker. Now Map 5 shows only the route inventory, and everything is open for discussion.

The plan now is to only look at Map 5 for about an hour, circle areas of concern, and indicate why. To clarify – all all we are trying to agree on is the open green roads.

Participant questions, comments, and responses:

Q1: BLM has said they are going to listen to what we conclude in these workshops, and it will “influence” the decision. Has the decision already been made, and are we just giving final input to see if they want to change anything?

A1: No decisions have been made. What we're doing here is trying to get agreement on a preferred alternative. That will be the end of the preliminary designation process. The Field Manager will adopt the preliminary designations for the preferred alternative defined by the stakeholders efforts as the proposed plan that will be analyzed in the environmental assessment (EA), as long as there is nothing illegal. There maybe some mitigation required after that, and then the EA will be released for comment for 30 days.

Q2: Alternatives are supposed to be a broad range of ideas. An alternative does not mean everyone has to agree. It's the best choice substantiated by data. A preferred alternative should be based on your best judgment by the data you have. We have already gone through the process of determining these alternatives. Are you saying everyone must agree on the preferred alternative?

A2: No, that is not necessarily true. The group is going to discuss the alternatives, and find a strategy to come up with the most agreement we can among the group. If this group wanted to pick alternative 3 for example, then that is a viable strategy. What we have tried to do with Map 5 is find out where there is already agreement.

Q3: Can we have a mileage figure for the difference between the maps after they were broken down?

A3: There are only very small changes – perhaps about one mile total. This is shown as the orange road.

Participant statements: Prior to beginning the exercise related to Map 5, two participants asked to make formal statements about the process representing constituencies' viewpoints.

Chris Radoccia:

When talking about Gila River and Martinez canyon, there is going to be a lot of controversy surrounding these areas. We are willing to give up the Gila River as long as we can still have access to roads that cross the river, and we can agree on gating Martinez Canyon, with a 3 year research plan to monitor impacts. The OHV community is willing to pay for the gate, and access would be "permitted" only, since this is important to be able to know who is going in an out.

We would like Jawbreaker open.

We are also willing to close the original entrance of Upper Woodpecker and take the existing bypass road as the new entrance, as long as we are able to make it as difficult as the original access road.

We recommend placing educational signs in Lower Woodpecker that would direct motorized use away from petroglyph sites.

Dale Volz:

Dale's presentation included a visual demonstration with string to illustrate the length of designated trails by type as they appear in Map 4. The string colors corresponded to the travel route designation colors used in Map 4 and were scaled such that one inch of string equaled one mile of trail. The green string represented open motorized routes (156.6 miles), purple string represented non-motorized trails (only 5.7 miles in the wilderness area), and although there is currently no designated non-motorized trail for use by bikers, the potential Arizona Trail will have bike access (8.2 miles). The red string represented the proposed closed routes (3.7 miles)

In short, there are only 5.7 miles of trails available for hikers and equestrian users, no designated trails available for bikers until the Arizona Trail comes through, only 3.7 miles proposed for closure, but 156.6 miles left open with 229.4 miles of motorized route still to be considered. You can clearly see the inequity of motorized routes to non-motorized routes. Until we have more hiking, equestrian, and bicycle trails designated, no additional miles of open motorized routes should be approved.

Map 5 Exercise and report outs:

Participants broke into three groups to review Map 5, seeking areas of agreement, disagreement, and remaining questions or uncertainty. The following are reports from each of the three groups:

Group 1: No areas of disagreement.

Group 2: Road between North and South Butte should be closed. Bighorn sheep is the issue here. We should keep the road open along the south border of South Butte. (It was agreed that the sheep issue would not be included in the collaborative group's discussions). Only one person in this group of 12 wanted to close this route – the rest were all in agreement

Group 3: The East/West road at the north end of the Box Canyon over the mountain is currently not colored, due to mitigation issues – it should be green. It should be open because it is a major road. It was identified in alternative B as limited, but the group now agrees that it should be indicated as green/open.

The south side of Gila River – the group is undecided (agree to disagree) if it should be green. The question for BLM to answer is whether OHV is impacting the sheep in the area. The route should therefore be changed from green to black (black meaning "pending further analysis").

For Township 3, south, section 18: The motorized route is adjacent to the wilderness area. This route needs further analysis because of wilderness intrusion problems. The

group agreed that it needs to be changed from green to black/blue. AZ Game and Fish supports it being open.

Gila River

Participants were tasked with reviewing all routes within or crossing the Gila River. The river bed as well as the river valley (riparian woodland) were identified as the area of concern. This includes the bottom-land as well as the channel, meaning the whole valley bed – including trees and the riparian area. In addition, the group was asked to look at routes crossing the river along the entire length within BLM-designated lands.

Group 1 Report

Clump 24: Crosses the river – undecided.

Clump 25: As depicted on the map. Should be closed along the river, with access to the riparian area stopping at the riparian zone to allow easy access to the river for fishing camping, hunting, etc. The area also needs special enforcement (dispersed camping). The map displays labeled routes 2+3 as closed- the group is in agreement on this issue.

SE4212D + SE4212A: Agreed on keeping this route open to enable access for enjoying the scenic railroad trestle bridge and tunnel.

Clump 27: No decision due to the railroad. Some of the group wanted the route closed due to riparian issues; others wanted it open if the rail crossing can be made legal – this is currently unknown.

Crossing at Cochran: Should be open and labeled #4 on Map GRC-3-Cochran Area.

Cochran-Clump 28 through SE4238 south side of river: One linear route as depicted on aerial photography.

Road #5: Agreement re GRC 3, 4, and 5.

SE4116: Agreed to disagree, based on concerns for riparian impacts. Some suggested the area is good for dispersed camping/day use.

SE4115- Agreed to disagree, with concerns for crossing the riparian area, given the access through the wash. Some wanted crossing; others felt that three crossings within three miles is too much.

SE4205: Agreement to keep the last 100 yards open. The campsite at the river should be open, but NO driving should be allowed in the river. The camp needs to stay on the south side.

Group 2

The dam crossing should be open/green (from Price Rd across the river to Whitlow Ranch). If there are gates currently in this area, they should be open. (San Carlos Irrigation District)

Clump 25: Keep open for driving in sand channel (1 dissenter, with AGFD in agreement).

Coke Ovens crossing (Copper Basin Railway railroad crossing owned by ASARCO): Agreement that there needs to be direct crossing that minimizes travel in the riparian area instead of the existing traverse-type crossing.

Cochran Area: A traverse-type crossing exists, but two crossings are located about 500 feet apart. Do we need both? This should therefore be changed from black to green. Should the campgrounds be kept open?

Clump 28-1A: Spur road to campgrounds – should it be kept as undeveloped?

SE4115: Change from black to green, with river crossing at the bottom. Concerns for riparian issues, but AGFD is okay with keeping it open.

SE4112: No existing crossing – needs further discussion.

Crossing at bottom of SE 4110: Needs further discussion.

Group 3

Cochran Crossing: Agreed to keep open.

SW3014-AFGD: Recommended closing, due to riparian areas

Cluster at North end of SW4207: Agreed to keep open (not including Clump 27, on which there was no agreement). AGFD concerned about crossing East of Cochran (SE4206-SE415), due to flycatcher and riparian issues. Note that a good crossing at Walnut Canyon exists – the group agreed that this influences whether to open/close the crossing East of Cochran. Note that any crossings off the railroad need to consider safety and rights-of-way issues.

SE4112 and off SE4205: Riparian concerns regarding two short spurs ending at the river east of Walnut Canyon.

Agreement that there would be no motorized travel up or down the river bed from crossings or other access.

Route South of River between Cochran and Sec 1, E of Walnut: Agreed that this route should remain open.

Synthesis – Gila River

- **Consensus for access below the dam:** Right now Diversion Dam Road is closed and gated by San Carlos Irrigation Project (SCIP) because of vandalism, trash and damage to facilities. The SCIP engineer indicated that they are amenable to making a bypass route that avoids passing by the diversion dam and associated facilities.
- **No Agreement on SW3014 (access to the Gila River from Box Canyon Rd down a wash) and crossing under the railroad).**
- **Consensus that sections in clump 25 and sandy wash SW3230 (routes that go north to the river) be kept open.**
- **Consensus to have access from SE4212D and SE4212A.**
- **Consensus there should be a route straight across the river (90 degree access road), that limits access to the riparian if there is permission to cross the railroad from the Copper Basin Railway. Excessive routes in riparian areas are undesirable.**
- **Agreement on keeping West Cochran Crossing open.** The west river ford crossing access route is the most reliable, it is the “long traverse” recommended by AGFD.

Comment #1: We talked about enforcement needs, and we certainly need to start now. If we don't start now, areas are going to be gone before the plan is even implemented.

C2: Concerns that this took more time than necessary because the river area was not well defined.

Mineral Mountain Complex

These discussions focused on designated “technical trails” within the Mineral Mountain Area. These include key routes such as Lower, Middle, and Upper Woodpecker, Jawbreaker, Axle Alley, as well as Cottonwood (including Upper and Lower Ajax) and Martinez Canyons and others. Individual trail maps were made available. The group was also encouraged to identify and discuss other routes not already highlighted. There was a previous BLM decision not to allow group events on Lower Woodpecker and Jawbreaker, and this was reflected in Map 4. These are now regarded as still open for discussion.

The group engaged in extended discussions about the possible trade-offs between routes, identification of potential study areas, limited use designations, and permitting. Martinez Canyon appeared to be the focal point of much of this discussion, which several participants described as “emotional,” and “based on opinions, rather than facts.” In the end, it was agreed that the group was at an impasse on Martinez Canyon and Jawbreaker, and that these areas should be “taken off the table” and eliminated from the collaborative discussion.

There was considerable discussion and exchange regarding the Woodpecker routes (Upper, Middle, Lower). The group did agree to close Lower Woodpecker, and many alternatives and approaches to permitting or mitigation were discussed for the other portions. OHV participants wanted Upper Woodpecker to remain open, with some acknowledging it should be open under a permitting system. Other means for limited access (e.g., physical barriers, or “gate-keepers”) were also discussed.

To summarize participants’ preliminary views on the key technical trails within the Mineral Mountain Complex:

- **Martinez Canyon – No progress – suggest eliminating from group discussion at this session.**
- **Jawbreaker – No progress – suggest eliminating from group discussion at this session.**
- **Lower Woodpecker – Agree to close.**
- **Middle Woodpecker – Discussion of options for physical limitations.**
- **Upper Woodpecker – Discussion of possible physical limitations.**
- **Box Canyon – Leave as open.**

Other routes and discussion points:

- Lower/Upper Ajax: Some suggested that there could be some opportunities for engineering solutions, and that this area may provide an opportunity to develop new technical trails to make up for others lost. Others commented that there is no way to put obstacles in lower Ajax – it is too wide, with too many access points.
- Axle Alley: Some felt that the trails here are self-limiting, and that the area is not as sensitive as other areas. Others commented that the route is in a more fragmented area – it has soils that are erodible, and steep waterfalls, and that access should be limited by number of vehicles and days.
- There was extended discussion about the suitability of locating technical trails within washes. The AZ Game and Fish Department has maintained that no trails

should be in washes; however, several OHV enthusiasts disagree with this view, regarding it as unrealistic in the Mineral Mountain Complex. Participants requested clarification on BLM's position regarding allowing trails within or crossing through washes.

Concluding comments:

Bill Gibson: I've seen a lot of creative energy here today, directed toward solving problems. I've seen this energy in other places in Arizona, and in other states, and I've seen how people have worked collaboratively like this to solve problems just like the ones we've faced here today. Billings Canyon in Colorado is a great example – varying opinions were considered, and they came up with some innovative approaches to offering suitable recreation options for OHV. Another example is Fruita near Grand Junction, Colorado. There they addressed some of the conflicts between mountain bikers and motorized access. Another example, near Boise Idaho, aimed to manage land where multiple agencies were involved, and here as well, both motorized and non-motorized interests were involved. They were able to pool their resources and use creative energy to come up with solutions. I'm confident that this group can continue to work to find these kinds of unexpected, but practical solutions to similar challenges.

Larry Fisher: This has been a tough day with mixed results. It seemed like you accomplished quite a bit early in the morning during the discussions of Map 5 and the Gila River, and I was impressed at the quality and the tenor of those discussions. People worked hard and generally worked well together, and it seemed like good progress was made in terms of identifying points of agreement and acknowledging areas where you all agreed to disagree. And then we got to Martinez Canyon, which seems to remain a touchstone and impasse for this group, and seems to conjure up lots of past issues and current emotions. Part of the life of any collaborative effort like this is that you're going to hit some of these impasses. The best thing I can suggest at points like this is to figure out whether it's worth slogging away and trying to solve it, or whether it's just not going to happen, and needs to be set aside – for practical reasons, as well as in the interest of trying to make progress on other issues. For the moment, anyway, it looks like Martinez Canyon is off the table. We can, of course, revisit this at any point in the two remaining workshops.

We've offered you the option of stopping here and perhaps agreeing that you've done all that you can do as a group. If this is the case, you know what you are going to get with the unfinished business – it becomes BLM's decision, and you all know the various ways you can influence those decisions from here. Several of you have suggested that you have a better chance working together than just leaving these issues to BLM's discretion. Everyone, when asked, agreed that it's worth coming back for Workshop III, and once again, we'll do the best we can to offer you an efficient way to address the remaining points of controversy. At the very least, my hope is that we can narrow the decision space and make it clearer for BLM how to proceed.

In the next meeting – on April 17th – we will summarize what has been achieved to date, focus more discussion on the remaining technical trails in the Mineral Mountain area, and talk about some of the options for limiting use.

I encourage you to discuss these issues among yourselves during the days ahead before the next workshop, and to try to come prepared with proposals for moving these issues forward. This will also help us use the time more efficiently during the short four hour meeting we have on April 17.

Requests from the group for next meeting:

- BLM and AGFD mission posted as reference for these discussions
- A detailed map indicating the technical trails (with names) in the main priority areas.