Multiple Use Information and Resource Network
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...for the recreation advocate

**PO Box 1057**
**Lakeside, CA 92040**
*619-390-8747 619-508-8840*
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Hector Villalobos
Field Manager
Bureau of Land Management
Ridgecrest Field Office
300 S. Richmond Rd.
Ridgecrest, CA 93555

Subject: South Park to Pleasant Canyon Loop Route

Mr. Villalobos:

This letter is to express California Association of 4 Wheel Drive Clubs concern over recent administrative actions and encourage Bureau of Land Management to enter into planning to accomplish the necessary route upgrades and repairs necessary to keep the South Park to Pleasant Canyon loop open to all motorized vehicles.

While the main focus of CA4WDC is to protect, promote, and provide for motorized recreation opportunities on public and private lands, many of our members participate in multiple forms of recreation; including but not limited to hunting, fishing, camping, hiking, horseback riding, bicycle riding, and gem and mineral collection.

We recognize the positive health and social benefits that can be achieved through outdoor activities. We also recognize that motorized recreation provides the small business owners in the local communities a significant financial stimulus. And, our members are directly affected by management decisions concerning public land use.

Our members subscribe to the concepts of: 1) public access to public lands for their children and grandchildren; 2) condition and safety of the environment; and 3) sharing our natural heritage. The general public desires access to public lands now and for future generations. Limiting access today deprives our children the opportunity to view the many natural wonders of public lands. The general public is deeply concerned about the condition of the environment and personal safety. They desire wildlife available for viewing and scenic vistas to enjoy. They also want to feel safe while enjoying these natural wonders. Lastly, the public desires to share the natural heritage with friends and family today as well as in the future. How can our children learn and appreciate our natural heritage when native species are allowed to deteriorate and historic routes are routinely blocked or eradicated from existence?

A major part of CA4WDC is providing motorized recreation opportunity to the public through its numerous events through-out the state. One highly popular event is Panamint Valley Days (PVD) which has completed 25 successful years.

Panamint Valley Days, held each fall under Special Recreation Permit issued by BLM Ridgecrest Field Office, uses a number of designated routes in the region during its event. One of the more popular trails rides is the South Park to Pleasant Canyon loop.

It was recently revealed that this particular route has been closed to full-sized vehicles due to safety concerns with a bridge. Meanwhile, the route does remain fully open to Side by Sides, ATV's, and motorcycles consistent with BLM and National Park Service use designation of the route.

Contact with the Ridgecrest BLM Field Office indicates the access across the bridge section has been administratively limited to lighter weight vehicles with concurrence of the BLM State Engineer until appropriate actions can be accomplished to stabilize and strengthen the section.

CA4WDC has used this route as part of its annual PVD event for the past 25 years. This route offers an opportunity for novice and intermediate skilled driver to view historic mining operations in the region and opportunities for other recreation pursuits such as rockhounding, photography and wildlife viewing.

CA4WDC strives to promote responsible recreation through education as a component of their events. The loss of routes like this hinder the ability of CA4WDC to promote the educational component where driving skills are stressed which results in lessening of future resource damage.

CA4WDC encourages BLM to review their position on the route and enter into planning to accomplish the necessary route upgrades and repairs necessary to keep the South Park to Pleasant Canyon loop open to all motorized vehicles.

CA4WDC is willing to discuss public-private partnership opportunities to accomplish the actions necessary to keep this route as part of the recreation inventory.

Respectfully,

John Stewart
Natural Resources Consultant
California Association of 4 Wheel Drive Clubs

Cc:
Bureau of Land Management, California State Office
Bureau of Land Management, California Desert District