



# WELCOME

Imperial County lies within the 7-million-acre Colorado Desert in southern California. This unique desert landscape is characterized by broad valleys and low, rugged mountain ranges carved by washes from the draining of seasonal rains. Though elevations range from 275 feet below sea level to nearly 10,000 feet in the mountains, most areas are below 1,000 feet. Summer daytime temperatures in the Colorado Desert can reach more than 110 degrees, and the average annual rainfall is only 2.92 inches. This region, and the average annual rainfall, supports commercial operations such as mining, renewable energy, and utility transmission, and provides a variety of recreational opportunities.

The public lands in eastern Imperial County are managed according to the Bureau of Land Management's (BLM's) Northern and Eastern Colorado Desert Coordinated Management Plan (referred to as NECO), which updates the California Desert Conservation Area Plan of 1980. A primary emphasis of NECO is the designation of routes of travel for motorized vehicles that protect the resources while still providing visitors access to the history, wilderness, recreation (including off-highway vehicle use), and wildlife throughout the area.



# HISTORY

The Colorado Desert contains thousands of historic and prehistoric archaeological sites and artifacts (objects made or used by humans) that provide a rich legacy of more than 10,000 years of human history in North America. Unfortunately, many sites have been damaged by unauthorized artifact collection and vandalism, which is illegal and subject to severe civil and criminal penalties. Some sites do allow activities such as rockhounding and metal detecting, with certain limitations. Where these activities are not allowed, please enjoy these fragile, nonrenewable resources by viewing, sketching, or photographing them, leaving the surface of the site undisturbed and the artifacts untouched.

## Tumco Historic Mining Town

Tumco is an abandoned gold mining town located in the Cargo Muchacho Mountains east of the Imperial Sand Dunes along Ogilby Road. Originally named Gold Rock Camp, and then Hedges, Tumco is also one of the earliest gold mining areas in California. Its history spans roughly 300 years, with several periods of boom and bust.

Gold was first discovered by Spanish colonists as they moved northward from Sonora, Mexico. According to legend, two young boys came into their camp one evening with their shirts filled with gold ore. These muchachos cargados (loaded boys) were the namesake for the Cargo Muchacho Mountains, where the Tumco deposits occur. Following the first discovery of gold, Mexican settlers operated numerous small mines for many years.

In 1877, the Southern Pacific Railroad completed the Yuma to Los Angeles line of its transcontinental route. The railroad allowed access to the gold in the Cargo Muchachos, leading to a gold rush into the area and the establishment of the town of Hedges. This initial rush to stake individual mining claims soon gave way to mining companies that moved into the area, purchased claims, and developed the mines on a large scale. A 12-mile wood pipeline pumped more than 100,000 gallons of water per day from the Colorado River to the mines and the railroad carried mine timbers from northern Arizona for use in the expansive underground workings. The Golden Cross Mining and Milling Company was formed in 1893, but high costs and operational problems put the company into receivership in 1895. In 1897, the area was taken over by the Free Gold Mining and Milling Company. By 1907, this company had abandoned the area and Hedges had become a ghost town. The United Mines Company took over the area in 1910, naming the town from the letters in the company name (TUMCO).

During the boom of the 1890s, the town supported about 400 people, making it the largest town in what is now Imperial County. The 140 mill stamps operating during its heyday produced \$1,000 per day in gold. Ultimately, over 200,000 ounces of gold was taken from the mines in the area. Historical



# WILDERNESS

Wilderness areas are special places where the land and resources retain a primeval character and remain essentially undisturbed. These areas provide habitat for numerous wildlife species, sources of clean water, and natural laboratories for research and education. They also provide extraordinary opportunities for solitude as well as recreational activities such as hiking, climbing, horseback riding, birdwatching, and stargazing. Visitors should expect primitive terrain with no facilities, trails, or other improvements. In accordance with the 1964 Wilderness Act, no use of motor vehicles, motorized equipment, or other form of mechanical transport is allowed in wilderness. Wilderness boundaries are set back 30 to 300 feet from the roads or trails leading to them.

## Indian Pass Wilderness

Indian Pass Wilderness is a distinctive part of the Chocolate Mountains, which extend from south-central Riverside County to the Colorado River near Yuma, Arizona. The highest point in this 32,418-acre wilderness is Quartz Peak at 2,200 feet. The jagged mountain peaks and spires are sliced by mazes of twisting canyons that carry water from occasional desert cloudbursts into several tree-lined washes. One of these washes passes through the heart of the wilderness, giving the region the nickname "Julian Wash country." The area's proximity to the Colorado River and the Arizona Desert contributes to the presence of wildlife species, such as the Colorado River toad, Great Plains toad, and tree lizard, that are common in other states, but are rarely seen in California. Burros and mule deer make their home throughout the entire area, and the rugged mountains provide ideal habitat for the desert bighorn sheep. Wild horses can often be found wandering into Julian Wash country, which is located about 50 miles west of Brawley.

## Little Picacho Wilderness

Little Picacho Wilderness, located 55 miles east of El Centro, encompasses the southern portion of the Chocolate Mountains. This 38,214-acre wilderness, which ranges in elevation from 200 to 1,500 feet, is characterized by jutting spires and steep ridges with ravines that gradually broaden into sandy, tree-lined washes. Slopes and plains are devoid of vegetation, instead covered with a desert pavement of angular cobbles. These rusty dark orange and brown cobbles stand out against the nearly white bottoms of the washes. A herd of 25 desert bighorn sheep enjoy the terrain, and the Picacho wild horse herd ranges over roughly 5,000 acres in the northwest corner of the wilderness. Wild burros can also be found roaming through

the area. These animals share their home with the desert tortoise and the spotted bat.

## Palo Verde Mountains Wilderness

Palo Verde Mountains Wilderness is distinguished by twin buttes, known as the Flat Tops, which stand out as a landmark against a range of jagged peaks. Palo Verde Peak is the high point of the range, rising to 1,800 feet. Dry washes cut across the mountain slopes, supporting such vegetation as paloverde, mesquite, and ironwood. Clapp Spring and its palm oasis are unique to this area, offering the only permanent water source to wildlife species like desert bighorn sheep, desert tortoises, and wild burros. Saguaros, a rare plant species in California, dot the southeastern part of this 30,562-acre wilderness located 18 miles southwest of Blythe.

## Picacho Peak Wilderness

Picacho Peak Wilderness, located 40 miles south of Blythe, contains 8,858 acres composed of three distinct regions. The central and western region is dominated by a massive range of dark gray mountains extending southeast from Indian Pass. Mica Peak, the highest point within the wilderness at 1,499 feet, is located near the center of this range. The region south of these central mountains is a rolling benchland that is dissected by narrow, vertical walled arroyos. The third region is in the northeastern area, where small peaks, open basins, and large washes have formed. The lowest points in the wilderness area are found in Gavilan and Carrizo Washes on the eastern boundary. The Carrizo Wash supports a natural rock "tank," which traps water at the base of Carrizo Falls. The falls are created by runoff from desert cloudbursts, which periodically cascade over a series of rock ledges dropping 40 feet. A large cattail-lined pool at the base of the falls provides a desert oasis for a variety of wildlife species, including desert bighorn sheep. Wild horses and burros roam this wilderness, and desert tortoises burrow in the soft volcanic soils.

## Little Chuckwalla Mountains Wilderness

The 28,034 acres of the Little Chuckwalla Mountains Wilderness include rugged mountains surrounded by a large, gently sloping bajada laced with a network of washes. To the north, a bajada gently rises to 400 feet, while the rugged mountains crest at 2,100 feet. Portions of this region provide habitat for bighorn sheep and desert tortoise, and the southern bajada provides crucial desert tortoise habitat. Several sensitive plant species grow here, including the California snakeweed, Alverson's foxtail cactus, and barrel cactus.



# RECREATION

## Camping

**Dispersed Sites:** Camping opportunities can be found throughout the public lands administered by the BLM. Primitive campsites offer one of the best ways to experience the deserts of California. These sites are widely dispersed, undeveloped, and generally do not have signs marking them as campsites. They are usually clear of vegetation and have a hard, compacted surface. The BLM generally allows dispersed camping on all BLM lands with the following conditions and exceptions:

- Camping is permitted for up to 14 days within a 28-day period at any location, after which campers must relocate at least 25 miles away.
- Camping is prohibited within 300 feet of any developed water source, including water guzzlers or watering troughs, to keep water accessible to wildlife and livestock.
- A **permit** may be required for campfires. Contact the California Department of Forestry and Fire Protection or the BLM El Centro Field Office prior to your trip if you plan to have a campfire. Restrictions on fires vary depending on fire danger, county ordinances, and other variables.
- In accordance with the California Desert Conservation Area plan, as amended, stopping, parking, and vehicle camping is allowed within 300 feet of designated routes of travel, except within sensitive areas (such as areas of critical environmental concern, desert wildlife management areas, and critical habitat areas) where the limit is 100 feet from the route.
- Camping is prohibited within 1 mile of any of the long-term visitor areas (LTVAs), where visitors are allowed to camp for as long as 7 months.
- Tent camping is permitted within all wilderness areas managed by the El Centro Field Office.

**Leave No Trace:** Many dispersed campsites are showing signs of impact from heavy use. You can lessen your impact on the desert by following these principles of minimum impact:

- Plan Ahead and Prepare:** Get to know the area, rules, regulations, and any other special concerns before you visit. Prepare for extreme weather, hazards, and emergencies.
- Travel and Camp on Durable Surfaces:** Use designated routes. Camp at previously used sites. When there is no danger of rain or flash flooding, camp in washes, where signs of camping will eventually be washed away. Camp at least 300 feet away from water sources.
- Dispose of Waste Properly:** Pack it in, pack it out. Pack out all trash, leftover food, and litter. Deposit human waste



# OFF-HIGHWAY VEHICLE USE

## Routes of Travel Designations

There are numerous opportunities for off-highway vehicle (OHV) recreation on the lands managed by BLM's El Centro Field Office. Miles of trails await all types of OHV enthusiasts. Please keep in mind that you are responsible for knowing, understanding, and complying with all OHV regulations. Please obey all signs regarding the management of public lands and routes. The NECO planning area is designated as a "limited use" area for vehicle travel, which means that vehicles must stay on approved, signed routes (open routes) and that no cross-country vehicle travel off of those routes is allowed. Vehicle travel is also prohibited in military training areas.

All routes, including navigable washes that have been inventoried and mapped on public lands, are designated in the NECO plan as open routes with the following exceptions:

- Where such use has already been limited or prohibited through publication of a final notice in the *Federal Register*.
- Where specific biological parameters proposed through the NECO plan are applied to minimize harassment of wildlife and significant disruption of wildlife habitats relative to motorized-vehicle use.
- Where restrictions on use are required to protect other resource values of the public lands, promote the safety of all users of the public lands, or minimize conflicts among various uses of the public lands. All navigable washes on public lands that have not been individually inventoried and mapped are designated "open" as a class except where such washes occur within a "washes closed zone" created to meet management goals.

The NECO planning area adjoins the Imperial Sand Dunes Recreation Area (ISDRA). While cross-country travel is not permitted within the NECO area, the ISDRA is an open area, which means that cross-country travel is allowed. The ISDRA can be accessed near Glamis.

## State of California Off-Highway Vehicle Laws

Many parts of the California Vehicle Code (CVC) are highlighted below, but not all California OHV laws are addressed here. Please remember, it is your responsibility to know the laws.

**Helmet Usage** - All-terrain vehicle (ATV) riders must wear an approved safety helmet (*38505 CVC*).

**Required Rider Safety Training** - No person under the age of 18 shall operate an ATV unless he or she has taken a certified safety course or is under the direct supervision of an adult who has the appropriate safety certification in his or her possession (*38503 CVC*). For ATV certification information, please contact the ATV Safety Institute at 800-887-2887.

**Parental Supervision** - No person under the age of 14 shall operate an ATV unless that person satisfies the requirements of *38503 CVC* (safety certification) and, in addition, is accompanied by and under the direct supervision of a parent or guardian (*38504 CVC*).

**Noise Restrictions** - Noise emissions of off-highway vehicles shall be limited to not more than 96 dBA if manufactured on or after January 1, 1986, and not more than 101 dBA if manufactured before January 1, 1986 (*38370 (h)(1) CVC*). Other restrictions may apply. Please visit the California Off-Highway Motor Vehicle Recreation Division Web site (<http://ohv.parks.ca.gov>) for more information.

**Carrying of Passengers** - No operator of an ATV shall carry a passenger while operating on public lands, except that one passenger may be carried if the ATV is designed to carry a passenger (*38506 CVC*).

**Operating an OHV Under the Influence of Alcohol or Drugs** - It is unlawful for any person who is under the influence of an alcoholic beverage or any drug, or under the combined influence of an alcoholic

beverage and any drug, to drive a vehicle (*23152(a) CVC*). Driving off-road or on-road with a suspended or revoked license is against the law (*14601 CVC*).

**Speed Laws**

- Basic Speed Law:** No person shall operate an off-highway vehicle faster than is safe for conditions (*38305 CVC*).

- Prima Facie Speed Limit:** The prima facie speed limit within 50 feet of any campground, campsite, or concentration of people or animals shall be less than 15 mph unless changed as authorized by the CVC (*38310 CVC*).

- Leave What You Find:** Protect cultural resources. Leave all artifacts as you find them. Leave natural objects and avoid damaging vegetation or transporting nonnative species.

- Minimize Campfire Impacts:** Use a lightweight gas stove for cooking. Fires, where permitted, should be kept small and within existing fire rings. Wood in arid environments is scarce, so bring your own firewood or do without.

- Respect Wildlife:** Observe from a distance. Properly store food and do not feed wildlife. Keep pets away from wildlife.

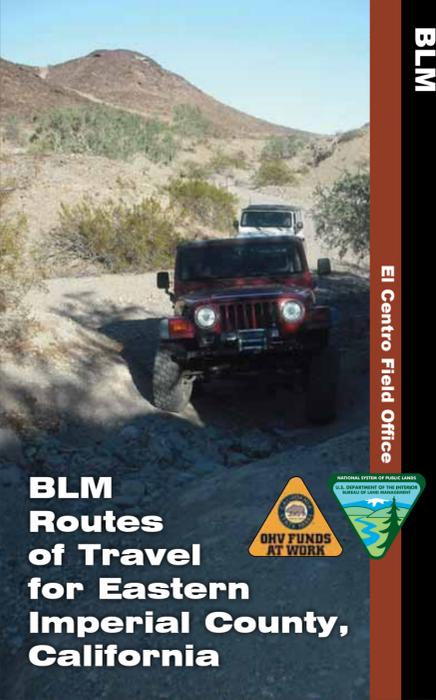
## Rockhounding

Rockhounding is one of many recreational activities on BLM lands in California. Rockhounds are welcome to collect small, noncommercial quantities of rocks, minerals, and gemstones free of charge on BLM lands. **Commercial collecting for the purpose of sale or barter is not allowed without special authorization.** Rockhounds may use hand tools such as shovels and picks but must not use explosives or power equipment for excavation.

Noncommercial collecting is allowed on most federal lands, but there are some exceptions. Some lands are withdrawn or reserved for certain purposes, such as outstanding natural areas, research natural areas, recreation sites, and national historic sites. Other lands are not open to collecting due to the presence of mining claims. The local BLM office can provide information about collecting areas, including whether any are closed or have fire or vehicle-use restrictions.

## Metal Detecting

Another recreational activity on BLM lands involves using metal detectors. Metal detecting is allowed on BLM lands as long as no artifacts (objects over 50 years old) are removed and surface disturbance is minimal. Avoid all cultural and archeological sites; leave artifacts undisturbed and report them to the appropriate BLM field office. Digging in or otherwise damaging archeological sites will lead to civil or criminal penalties. Metal detecting enthusiasts may remove a handful of rocks from picnic areas, campgrounds, recreational sites, and other areas as long as those areas are not part of a mining claim. Mining claims can be researched on BLM's land and mineral Legacy Rehost 2000 System (<http://www.blm.gov/lr2000>). If you have any questions regarding your activities, please contact BLM's El Centro Field Office for authorization.



# BLM Routes of Travel for Eastern Imperial County, California



## EMERGENCY INFORMATION: Police-Fire-Ambulance 911 or 760-339-6311

Imperial County Sheriff's Office	760-339-6311 or 1-800-452-2051
California Highway Patrol (El Centro Office)	760-482-2500
CHP Local Road Conditions	760-482-2555 1-800-BE-ALERT
U.S. Customs and Border Protection Dispatch	1-800-901-2003

## For More Information Contact:

Bureau of Land Management		
El Centro Field Office		
1661 S. 4th Street El Centro, CA 92243	760-337-4400	<a href="http://www.blm.gov/ca/elcentro">www.blm.gov/ca/elcentro</a>
Yuma Field Office		
2555 E. Gila Ridge Road Yuma, AZ 85365	928-317-3200	<a href="http://www.blm.gov/az/st/er/fo/yuma_field_office.html">www.blm.gov/az/st/er/fo/yuma_field_office.html</a>
Palm Springs-South Coast Field Office		
1201 Bird Center Drive Palm Springs, CA 92262	760-833-7100	<a href="http://www.blm.gov/ca/palmsprings">www.blm.gov/ca/palmsprings</a>

## SAFETY

In the Colorado Desert, temperatures in the summer often exceed 110 degrees. Visitors should plan accordingly and carry a minimum of a gallon of water per day for each member of their party, as well as sunscreen, a hat, sunglasses, and a daypack. Cell phone and global positioning system (GPS) coverage may be limited in remote areas, so you may also want to carry maps and a compass. In addition, always advise others of where you are going and when you plan to return.

BLM/CA/GI-11/012+8300



# WILDLIFE

While it seems that little could survive in this harsh, arid environment, a wide variety of wildlife species have adapted to the climate of the Colorado Desert. Such adaptations are evident in the microphyll woodlands that have developed in the alluvial fan formed as flash floods drain from the Cargo Muchacho and Chocolate Mountains onto a flatter plain. In these microphyll woodlands, the mesquite, creosote, ironwood, and paloverde have evolved with small leaves, enabling them to retain more water and stay cooler. This canopy of small leaves provides shelter from the sun's intense rays for the coyotes burrowing beneath it and the great horned owls nesting within it. It also shades the ponds that form from the summer monsoons, supplying the Couch's spadefoot, desert tortoise, and numerous other species with much needed water. These microphyll woodlands support the highest density of wildlife within the desert. Maintaining the delicate balance of this desert environment is critical to the survival of the wildlife found here and throughout the area, particularly those species that are sensitive, threatened, or endangered. Please respect the wildlife you encounter and avoid any disturbance to wildlife habitat.

## Desert Tortoise

The desert tortoise, a federally threatened species under the Endangered Species Act, is a seldom-seen inhabitant of the desert. The tortoise's potential habitat range extends east from the microphyll woodlands along the east side of the Imperial Sand Dunes. If you find a tortoise in the desert, respect its privacy and space. You may take pictures and observe it, but do not touch or harass the animal. If you find a tortoise, either dead or alive, don't collect it. Call the BLM El Centro Field Office with the general location, global positioning system (GPS) coordinates (if available), your contact information, and the condition of the tortoise. Report any vandalism, harassment, or collecting to the El Centro Field Office or the California Department of Fish and Game's "CallTip" number: 1-888-334-2258. For more information, contact the El Centro Field Office or visit [www.tortoise.org](http://www.tortoise.org) or [www.deserttortoise.org](http://www.deserttortoise.org).

## Desert Wildlife Management Areas

Desert wildlife management areas (DWMAs) have been established for the protection and recovery of the desert tortoise. DWMAs encompass much of the designated critical habitat for the desert tortoise and are managed as areas of critical environmental concern (ACECs). They may overlap other specially designated areas on BLM and military lands. Special management measures have been established to minimize disturbance to habitat and maximize mitigation, compensation, and restoration from authorized uses within the DWMAs.



# BLM Routes of Travel for Eastern Imperial County, California

Map Symbols		Legend	
	Open Route		Bureau of Land Management
	County Road		Bureau of Reclamation
	Major Road		U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service
	NECO Planning Boundary		Military
	BLM ACEC Boundary		State
	BLM ISDRA Fee Area Boundary		Private/Other
	BLM Wilderness		
	BLM OHV Open Area		

- Designated routes are suitable for all types of off-highway vehicles, including motorcycles, all-terrain vehicles, and 4x4 vehicles.
- No off-route travel is allowed in limited use areas.
- No use of motor vehicles, motorized equipment, or other form of mechanical transport is allowed in wilderness.
- Vehicle camping is allowed within 300 feet of designated routes of travel, except within sensitive areas (such as areas of critical environmental concern, desert wildlife management areas, and critical habitat areas) where the limit is 100 feet from the route.
- County roads (open to street legal vehicles only) are often graded dirt roads and are considered "easy"; and open routes are generally considered "moderately difficult."



**Danger Keep Out!**

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**Glamis Area**

**Picacho Peak Area**

**Tumco Area**

**Cargo Muchacho Mtns**

← To Brawley, CA

← To El Centro, CA

To Blythe, CA ↑

This scale only applies to this route diagram and not to the smaller route insets.

