

BLM holds meeting May 9th on Trail Comments Received to Date

The Lake Havasu BLM Field Office, having recorded the recent route comments and new/missed trails and now that the public comment period has closed, felt it would be beneficial to host a special meeting to bring the public up to date.

Billed as "We heard you" the meeting was intended to show how the BLM had documented the comments received and incorporated them into additional maps showing those routes which received comments and the missing/new routes/trails received. Also highlighted was how the BLM categorized the 2200 plus comments received and a flow chart was provided which outlined the review teams work sessions this summer and fall culminating with the submittal of their data for the computerized Travel Management Plan later this winter. A final 30 day public comment period is slated for January 2012.

The meeting was held from 6 P.M. to 8 P.M. May 9, in an informal setting, at the Aquatic center with approximately 75 people present. BLM introduced some new personnel and announced a few District wide personnel changes. The room was set up with the original 4 maps on one wall. Maps of trails which received comments and maps with new/missing trails added were duplicated at each end of the room. Pie charts illustrated a categorization of comments by those in favor of various maps and the future BLM time line (copies of handouts with most of this information will be available on the H4W web site).

District Manager Angie Lara offered comments at the start of the session. Unfortunately the meeting quickly degenerated with questions from a mix of people varying from those new to the process to those who have worked with it since its inception. Senator Ron Gould asked if BLM worked with local government as mandated. When told yes, he stated no one from BLM has contacted his office. Most were concerned that the process had a perceived need for route closures and with the Travel Management Process in general.

A statement that BLM was verifying all trails drew the question "How with what limited off road BLM equipment currently available?" A field worker replied that 'those trails they couldn't drive were walked' drew skepticism.

Later it was clarified that they walked each end to the middle to affirm there was actually a trail. In any case new BLM maps are to be available on the BLM web site in the next few weeks.

Unfortunately, the confusion could have been stopped at the beginning simply by having someone chair the session, having spectator seating & some control. A simple statement could have clarified the "We heard you" theme by stating upfront 'We're not here to take comments; we just want you to see how we have summarized the comments collected. We have a handout with the details. The original maps & pie charts are on the wall. Maps at each end have the trails that received comment and another with new/missed routes added. Please look them over & let us know if there are errors. We just finished these maps yesterday & hope to have them on line in the next two weeks.'

What happens next here?

Apr/May	Route field verifications
Jun/Jul	Reevaluate routes receiving comments and proposed routes
Aug	Team Route evaluations
Sep/Dec	Environ, assessment & TMP prep
Jan 2012	30 day public comment period
Feb	Review of Public Comments
Mar/Apr	Completed TMP & Record of Decision

While our portion of the Havasu Unit is being completed, a similar process will begin immediately in Quartzite and Yuma. The TMP, as far as the remainder of the trails and lands in lower BLM Lake Havasu Unit and other units of LH Field office, are on hold.

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Public Lands Committee