



The Juniper Journal

WEMO Route Network Project Review Period - Hiking Trails

In last month's newsletter, we reported the release of the draft impact statement by the Bureau of Land Management (BLM) for the West Mojave Route Network Project (WMRNP). This release started a 90-day public comment period and the goal of Friends of Juniper Flats (FOJF) is the designation of trails in Juniper Flats dedicated to hiking, horseback riding, and similar low-impact recreational activities.

For a brief background of where we are today, in 2006 the BLM designated thousands of miles of routes for vehicles in approximately 3 million acres of the West Mojave



(WEMO) desert (including the Juniper Flats area). A federal court overturned that plan in 2009 citing the failure to "minimize" the impacts of motorized routes to the fragile desert resources and an inadequate environmental analysis. The BLM was ordered by the court to re

-evaluate their 2006 plan.

The new draft plan just released by the BLM includes four alternative plans, with Alternative 4 (Alt.4) including "non-motorized" and "non-mechanized" routes many of which would be in the Juniper Flats area. Alt. 4 is also referred to as the



"Preferred" alternative. Though Alt. 4 sounds nice, it still includes about 6,314 miles of motorized routes. To give you perspective, that is over eight times the length of Interstate 5 from San Diego to the Oregon border. This alternative designates only around 179 miles of routes to non-motorized / non-mechanized trails (low-impact hiking types of trails).

However, Alt. 4 would be a start as there are currently no designated hiking trails in Juniper Flats. Your

FOJF organization intensified its work with the BLM over the past couple of years to develop designated hiking trails, and we appreciate your support. Your Steering Committee members also attended the BLM "open house" last April 17th at the Hilton Garden Inn to learn more about the alternative plans and voice support for protection of our Mojave Desert..

We are calling on our members and others to please submit your comments to the BLM in support of hiking trails in Juniper Flats. You can do this by emailing the BLM, filling out and submitting their "Public Comments" form, or through BLM's interactive online map. Please go to our website www.friendsofjuniperflats.org for more details and instructions for making comments to the BLM. The public comments form is available for download on our site, as well as a link to the interactive map.



Shooting and Hunting

Our concerns continue with respect to recreational shooting in Juniper Flats, especially in the riparian area of Arrastre Falls where relatively new interpretive signs are being treated as targets. Juniper Flats is a shotgun only area per San Bernardino county ordinance and no recreational target shooting with rifles or handguns is allowed. FOJF representatives are working with the BLM, the County of San Bernardino and State Fish and Game wardens, to spread the word about the rules regarding hunting and shooting in this shotgun only area. Shotgun only is defined as "shotguns firing shot no larger than 1/2 the diameter of the bore".

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We're on the Web!

- (1) www.friendsofjuniperflats.org
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- (3) Facebook - <https://www.facebook.com/Friends-of-Juniper-Flats-1988946144701669/>

What is Juniper Flats?

Juniper Flats, in the foothills and mountainous areas south of Apple Valley, CA, covers 101,272 acres of mixed public and private lands. It offers an attractive transition landscape of mountains, boulder fields, and canyons supporting a unique mixture of plants from both desert and mountain environments. Its streams and riparian areas support an abundant variety of wildlife. Juniper Flats is a year-round recreation destination in which Friends of Juniper Flats encourages low-impact activities such as hiking, horseback riding, picnicking, and nature photography.

Shooting and Hunting

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<http://cms.sbcounty.gov/parks/FishandGameCommission/ShootingMaps.aspx>

BLM has the authority to impose stricter provisions and we hope to get some "no shooting" signs at the Arrastre Waterfall location which is a popular destination for families with children.



Not a member yet?



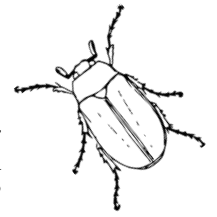
Juniper Jack asks . . .

We invite you to join the Friends of Juniper Flats to help with our goals of protecting, preserving and restoring Juniper Flats. Dues are only \$5 per year. Just send your check for your membership to the address shown above, along with your name, address, phone number, and email address.

Donations in any amount are also welcome.

To Be A Naturalist

by Wendy Walker



Do you ever notice the round, black beetle crossing the path in front of you and marvel at the tiny footprints left behind? Does your heart beat fast when you see a snake, not out of fear, mind you, but just from the thrill of seeing it in the wild? When you walk past a tree, do you notice the ants crawling up the trunk, and the bird hiding in the leaves? Do you forever seek knowledge of these things and praise yourself when you can identify a new species you just learned?



If you answered yes to these inquiries, CONGRATULATIONS! For you, my dear, are a bona fide Naturalist: "a person who studies plants and animals as they live in nature." (Source: Merriam-Webster's Learner's Dic-

tionary). This requires no degree and it certainly is a worthy title to have. Why? Because you have been blessed with just the right amount of curiosity to ignite the interest of others by engaging them in conversation about the wild things that are dear to you.

Don't keep that knowledge bottled up and don't stop learning. One thing you have over the less observant trail blazer zooming past you with earbuds pulsating is the more subtle knowledge of the land. You can't have a one sided interaction with something if you really want to understand it. You learn by getting on your knees and watching a spider hide under the flower to know where the spiders are. You make the connection of how some bees get pollen, by watching them spin drunkenly in a cactus flower. You might even learn to spot a coyote by watching ravens dive noisily at the ground below.

Seriously, did you know that Jane Goodall studied chimpanzees without a college degree? She made great breakthroughs by observation and interaction. Leonardo da Vinci was a mathematician, inventor, artist, botanist and more, and never had a formal education. There are many others, Benjamin Franklin, Michael Faraday and Henry David Thoreau. So wear that Naturalist hat proudly and pass your enthusiasm on to others, especially the children! Nature's hallowed halls have honed many curious minds and was, after all, the original schoolhouse. This education is free to anyone who is willing to engage it and the rewards are many. The best thing about a Naturalist is their desire to pass on the knowledge and their contagious enthusiasm on the trail. You might just already be one!