

FINAL PROJECT REPORT

FEATURED PROJECT: GPS ROADS

INTRODUCTION

DESCRIPTION OF THE PROJECT:

Although this project has been modified from the original proposal, especially with regards to milestones and deliverables—(as a result of the BLM not hiring a liaison to work with PIC until June, 2003, and that liaison being a necessary condition before any actual GPSing of roads could start and before much interaction with the rural communities could begin)—the description of the project remains essentially the same; that being, to partner with the BLM and rural organizations to GPS the roads in the Gold Butte ACEC. Additionally, all roads in the Gold Butte area will be GPSed to provide a continuity and completeness to the network of roads in that area. Further, although not specifically stated in any contract or milestone, it is understood, and PIC commits to, working with other agencies to further provide that continuity and completeness to the network of roads in the Gold Butte area. Those other agencies include, but may not be limited to, the Arizona BLM, National Park Service, and Bureau of Reclamation.

The other essential component of this project involves working with the rural communities to bring them into the process, to provide them the means of ‘ownership’ in this process, to solicit and compile input from the rural communities, to facilitate and incorporate, as much as possible, rural input into the process, to thoroughly and actively involve the rural communities in this process--from the very beginning through the end, to provide the rural residents of northeast Clark County with a forum and a means to express their concerns, opinions, and desires regarding rural road issues, to build a working relationship with the BLM and the rural communities in order to provide an atmosphere that would allow the above to happen, and to ultimately produce a designated network of roads that is something the BLM, the rural communities, and the IMC can all, through compromise, ‘live with’.

BACKGROUND AND NEED FOR THE PROJECT:

The need for this project can be found in the MSHCP Conservation/Management Actions for the BLM (207) “Implement the following management actions in desert tortoise ACECs,....Item 10) Designate as ‘limited to designated roads and trails’ for all motorized and mechanized vehicles.” Additionally, on pg 2-200 of the Clark County MSHCP/EIS final draft 9/00, it states, “In cooperation with the BLM, continue the joint process they have begun to establish accurate maps and determine baseline mileage of all unpaved roads within Clark County, including RS2477 roads. This process should result in an updated GIS coverage for the county. This process has begun in the southern end of the county and is proceeding north.”

Designation of routes in the southern portion of Clark County proceeded without much incident, but in 1998 when that process moved to the northern section of Clark County, a literal ‘mini-rebellion’ erupted. One of the main reasons for this rebellion was the complete lack of any rural participation or involvement in the process. No matter what directives are written in a plan, without direct local participation, those directives are doomed to fail. The Clark County Commissioners recognized that

inherent weakness in any plan, as has the IMC with their 3-legged stool analogy. Therefore, the designation of routes in northeast Clark County came to a screeching halt. It was absolutely necessary to involve the rural residents of northeast Clark County if the designation of routes were to be a successful implementation action. At this same time, PIC was born—out of the determination that standing on the sidelines and complaining loudly would never achieve anything. Active involvement, everyone decided, was the only way to affect change, to provide a means for rural concerns and issues to be incorporated into any plan or management action. The saying, “Teach me and I forget, Show me and I remember, Involve me and I understand” became PIC’s motto. The only way to bring the rural community’s concerns, desires, etc. into any process was to get involved and PIC was formed to do just that.

Therefore, the underlying need and background for this project must include the failed designation process in 1998 and acknowledgement of why that process failed--lack of rural involvement, participation, and no rural ‘ownership’ in the process and the outcome. Thus, a necessary ingredient to successfully complete the mandate of roads designation in ACECs must include a comprehensive program of working with and including the rural communities in the ENTIRE process. That PIC can fulfill that necessary link and role between the BLM, the IMC and the rural communities is another essential ‘need’ for this project.

MANAGEMENT ACTIONS ADDRESSED:

- 2.8.3.4 Public Information and Education**
- 2.8.3.9 Participation in and Funding of Local Rehabilitation and Enhancement Programs**
- 2.8.3.9.c Off-highway Vehicles**
- 2.8.6.6 (207) Implement the following management actions in desert tortoise ACEC’s:
10) Designate as “Limited to designated roads and trails” for all motorized and mechanized vehicles**
- 2.8.6.6 (212) BLM shall consider with respect to rural roads the following measures,...**

GOALS AND OBJECTIVES OF THE PROJECT:

- * Train and mobilize a core group of volunteers capable of conducting GPS data collection
- * Create a thorough, workable data dictionary
- * Collect GPS data with BLM liaison of Gold Butte, Mormon Mesa, and all related and connected non-ACEC areas
- * Work with the BLM on all aspects of this project
- * Work with NPS, BOR, Arizona BLM (Arizona Strip office) and other governmental officials in an attempt to share GPS data and to provide connectivity on roads and maps where agency’s boundaries meet
- * Develop criteria for accompanying digital database
- * Collect digital data to correlate with GPS database
- * Develop ‘survey questionnaire’ regarding rural resident’s personal roads use
- * Distribute, collect, assimilate, and summarize survey of rural resident’s road use
- * Develop presentation materials and format
- * Conduct at least 5 presentations
- * Develop workshop materials, schedule, and format
- * Conduct at least 1 workshop
- * Attend and report to IMC Roads Working Group all northeast Clark County road issues
- * Attend Friends of Gold Butte meetings and solicit feedback regarding road issues
- * Prepare report summarizing ‘survey questionnaire’ results

- * Facilitate and assist BLM in all rural meetings related to road issues
- * Develop a network of designated roads in northeast Clark County ACEC's by working with BLM and rural residents and rural organizations
- * Provide active involvement of rural residents by facilitating, administering, scheduling, coordinating, and assisting rural residents in the collection of GPS and digital data
- * Provide active involvement of rural residents by facilitating, scheduling, coordinating, assisting, and encouraging rural residents to provide input regarding roads and all associated road issues
- * The controversial and confrontational issue of road designation in northeast Clark County, through compromise, hard work, patience, and rural involvement, will be resolved
- * Road designation and signage of roads will reduce illegal and off-road incursions into sensitive tortoise habitat and ACECs
- * Road designation and signage of roads will reduce illegal new roads from being created in sensitive tortoise habitat and ACECs
- * Road designation and signage will enhance the safety of citizens traveling in the Gold Butte area
- * A detailed database of all roads will enhance and assist the BLM with their other mandates of wildfire containment, resource protection, rehabilitation projects, etc.

METHODS AND MATERIALS

The methods used to accomplish the above stated goals and objectives initially seemed to be completely dependent on the BLM hiring the roads coordinator/liaison, and of course, many specifically stated items DID require direct involvement at an almost daily level of a 'BLM person'. However, it did not seem appropriate, prudent, or efficient to 'wait' for that position to be filled. Therefore, PIC turned to doing what we could do—building meaningful relationships with rural town boards and city councils, getting to know better the citizens who served on those boards, building relationships with any and all rural organizations, discussing public land and road issues with as many rural residents as we could, researching and learning the issues not only from the rural perspective, but also from the IMC perspective and the federal land manager's perspective. Additionally PIC spent time building relationships with many key people in the BLM, the County, the Fish and Wildlife, the National Park Service, etc and learning the rules and regulations that spell out all the governmental responsibilities. It is abstract and vague, but PIC set out to do exactly what we have always stated on our business cards, "Bridging the gap between rural communities and government entities".

One year later, when the BLM wanted to initiate the process of designating rural roads, PIC was ready to help facilitate and assist the BLM as they undertook the initial meetings. The previous year's groundwork provided a solid foundation necessary to begin the process of the BLM and the rural communities working through the rural roads issues. These first meetings were very positive, yet without the roads coordinator position being filled, people were concerned this momentum might be lost. So, the County, BLM, and PIC sat down and developed milestones and deliverables that PIC could work on and accomplish in order to capitalize on the positive start to the process, while waiting for the roads coordinator to be hired. This was very beneficial and allowed PIC to move forward, accomplishing many specific items in preparation for the roads coordinator being hired.

Chief among those items were training and mobilizing a core group of volunteers so that GPS data collection could commence upon the BLM hiring a person to accompany and assist PIC in this project.

PIC obtained all the equipment and took training classes; PIC gave presentations to rural groups and developed a list of over 25 volunteers. PIC developed a series of handouts and training instructions and trained volunteers; this process ultimately developed into an ongoing project wherein new volunteers are always being recruited and trained. Training more volunteers as the project goes forward allows for a broader base of rural residents to become actively involved in this process. For the initial group of over 25 volunteers, PIC conducted more than 20 training sessions and more than 10 practice sessions in preparation of doing actual field work with the BLM.

During this same time period, PIC received additional training from BLM GIS personnel; this training involved actual fieldwork and was a great asset to PIC being able to teach and pass those instructions and information on to rural volunteers.

Much time and effort were also spent in designing the accompanying paperwork. Each GPS data point is cross-referenced to the daily field notes which provide backup information and additional details for each feature that is GPSed. The daily field notes were also designed to provide extra details about unusual items or circumstances and to provide further information not captured in the scroll down dictionary menu or not captured in digital photographs.

BLM GIS personnel also worked with PIC to develop an extensive data dictionary for the project. This data dictionary was repeatedly tested in the field, modified, then tested again until a comprehensive data dictionary was finalized. This final version contains 30 attributes in the route menu, 54 attributes in the point menu, 9 attributes in the area menu, and 4 attributes in the linear feature. The attributes were designed to capture as many human use and human misuse actions as possible.

The process of defining the criteria for the digital database underwent the same process of field-testing, modification, more field-testing, until the final protocol for a comprehensive digital database was established. The digital database corresponds to the GPS database and both are cross-referenced to the daily field notes and working maps that are used in the field.

The County, BLM, and PIC also felt it important to capitalize on the momentum generated during the BLM's initial visits and so added milestones that involved seeking widespread rural input into the roads issue. A questionnaire and input form was developed to informally obtain information from rural residents regarding their personal use of roads—what were their favorite areas to visit, what were their favorite activities, when did they visit those areas, how many times a year, etc. PIC gave presentations at town boards, city council meetings, and other meetings of rural organizations to introduce the questionnaire and input form and to explain the importance of rural residents participating in this portion of the project. This too, is an ongoing process, as the questionnaire and input form are continually circulated at rural centers, rural events and activities, as well as special presentations and/or workshops held exclusively for the roads project. As the project moves forward, these questionnaires will supplement the GPS data collection in providing avenues for active rural participation and will also provide insight into areas and roads of significant interest to rural residents.

Through the hard work and diligence of key BLM personnel, Linda Cardenas and Gayle Marrs-Smith especially, additional money was found and an intern was hired in June/July. This intern position, while not replacing the roads coordinator position, would allow actual GPS data collection to begin and provide the BLM with a 'person' on the ground until the roads coordinator position is filled.

PIC met with Gayle and Adam Lewandowski, the BLM intern, and developed a practical schedule to follow which included first introducing Adam to all of the town boards and city councils. Adam and PIC also met with the groups of volunteers, to introduce them to Adam, to go over any questions, and to clear up any confusing areas before beginning the actual GPSing of roads and points.

Adam, PIC, and other BLM GIS personnel also developed the protocol for information transfer and established a precise routine of data processing and data transfer starting with the actual collection of

raw data and culminating with the BLM adding corrected data into their system and producing maps detailing GPS work done to date overlaid on a layer of all previous road data.

Actual GPS data collection began on Mormon Mesa, chosen as an area to begin data collection while working out the ‘bugs’ in the system, if any, and providing the volunteers with a window of ‘learning’ in case any mistakes were made before GPS data collection in the Gold Butte ACEC began.

As a result of Adam being hired and actual GPS data collection commencing, the Roads Working Group became active again and is again routinely holding meetings. Adam, Gayle, and the BLM make regular reports to the Roads Working Group, as does PIC. Detailed updates are provided along with current maps of GPSed roads and points.

While sections of Mormon Mesa are still not GPSed, it was decided to save those areas as future training grounds for new volunteers and to begin GPS data collection in the Gold Butte ACEC.

This work will continue under the 2003-2005 biennium and will be funded with monies from the MSHCP portion of PLMA.

The materials used in this project are Geo3 Explorer Trimble units (2), Kodak digital cameras (2), BLM vehicles, PIC vehicles, volunteer’s vehicles, assorted hand tools and office equipment, paper, presentation easels, and miscellaneous associated office products and equipment, presentation materials and equipment, workshop materials and any relevant equipment.

RESULTS AND EVIDENCE OF THE RESULTS

Results are immediately apparent upon looking at the maps detailing the GPS data collected by rural volunteers, PIC, and the BLM. Those maps demonstrate and identify where GPS data, routes, points, intersections, photo points, and other miscellaneous information has been collected.

The results of building relationships and bridging gaps between rural communities and government agencies can be evidenced in the BLM’s positive reception during the initial meetings last year and in the acknowledgement from the rural communities that they do not desire any new roads. The rural communities, on a whole, are quite comfortable with a baseline of 1998 existing roads and ‘new’ roads created since then are not of importance to the rural communities. This is a significant demonstration of progress in the rural community’s collective mindset, as previously existing roads meant all roads existing to date. This eliminates a primary point of contention between the BLM and the rural communities. The BLM prefers the 1998 baseline of existing roads and does not want to acknowledge any new roads created since 1998. The rural communities, with the possible exception of a few individuals, are in agreement with this.

Further results of this project, to date—as it is ongoing into the next biennium—are all town board and city council reports, wherein PIC documents items discussed at each meeting. Additionally, local papers report on all town board and city council agenda items; the archives of each paper contain evidence of all the public information and public involvement at the local government level. The exception, until December, 2003, is that of Bunkerville Town Board; until December, 2003, the town board agenda and minutes of Bunkerville Town Board have not been printed in the local paper; that changes as of December, 2003. Additional documentation of public interaction, involvement, public notification and discussion at the local government level can be obtained from archived county records.

Additionally, both the Moapa Valley Progress and the Desert Valley Times have covered this project on a routine basis, something PIC is very grateful for. Their archives, as well as PIC’s files, contain all references, articles, and pictures of this project to date.

Results (and evidence of those results) of the ongoing GPS project are the actual GPS files, of which both PIC and the BLM retain that information. Other results are all the digital photos, the paperwork involving training sessions and practice sessions; all paper files and computer files relating to this project, all BLM documentation of this project which is a completely separate accounting of this project.

Results of this project and evidence of those results can be found in the records and documentations of each rural group participating in this project. Additional results of this project and accompanying evidence can be obtained by interviewing participants, members of participating organizations, and rural citizens at large.

EVALUATION/DISCUSSION OF RESULTS

Regarding the actual, physical collection of GPS data and the accompanying database that information will compile, there is 100% reaction among all people, from rural residents to IMC members and everyone in between, that this project is important and necessary. Without any exceptions, everyone realizes the serious lack of accurate, complete, and comprehensive 'hard data' regarding the Gold Butte area. It is a rough, beautiful, enormous land mass that citizens naturally gravitate to—yet there is minimal, if any, signage and information for the casual user. For the average citizen living in the surrounding population centers of Las Vegas and southern Utah, for the tourists and the many repeat-tourists, and for the rural citizens who live in Moapa Valley and Virgin Valley, there is a universal cry for information, mileage, conditions of roads, what roads take you where, where am I, how do I get to 'here', where is 'this', etc. The need for accurate hard data becomes more pressing with each passing month as more and more citizens visit the Gold Butte and Whitney Pockets area.

And natural resource professionals, government employees of all agencies, and others whose jobs require them to spend time in the area, need accurate and comprehensive information.

That this project is necessary and important has not been refuted by anyone. Rather, any frustration has been in the slowness of getting this project started; no one more frustrated than PIC—although the delay provided fertile opportunity to do considerable public relations and public information work in the rural community. And in retrospect, that initial time spent in the rural communities was a valuable and necessary component and was so successful precisely because it was done before the project actually got started. Many 'outsiders' overlook the rural communities' inherent doubt and suspicion regarding anything they think gets undertaken without their prior knowledge. The rural communities' firmly believe that most 'government projects' are started and almost completed, before they are told about it—all anyone wants the rural communities to do is 'rubber stamp' something. So, in retrospect, the successful adoption of this project is primarily due to ample and often discussion of the project, long before it actually started. When the rural communities ASK when the project is going to get started and are WAITING for it to begin—that is significant!

CONCLUSION

In conclusion, it is important to come back to the reason for this project; the BLM is mandated to designate roads in all ACEC's. No one questions, however, that the BLM would be successful with simply declaring a network of roads as open and closing the rest, without rural consensus. Everyone, to a person, wants to avoid the ugly confrontation in 1998 when that was attempted. Therefore, to bring the

rural communities into the process, to have them work with the BLM and jointly resolve issues, to have the rural communities of northeast Clark County actively participate in this project and actively participate in the decision-making process of deciding what roads could be closed becomes a condition of that mandate. That 'condition' is reinforced by the Clark County Commissioners announcing that this must happen, that roads would not be closed in the northeast part of Clark County without rural consensus and rural buy-in to the process and the outcome of that process.

To that end, this project immediately becomes a project with two equally important phases: 1) actively involving the rural communities in the process and actively involving the rural communities in the decision-making part of the process, thus resulting in consensus from the rural communities regarding a designated roads network and rural buy-in into adopting that designated roads network, and 2) the actual collection of GPS data regarding all roads in the ACECs and the connectivity of roads going out of or coming into the ACECs, actual GPS data collection of human uses and human misuses in the ACECs, and the collection of any and all data, GPS or otherwise, that will create the end-product of an accurate, systematic, methodical, and comprehensive baseline database. In turn, then, this database can be used to create the necessary maps and information that users need, as well as provide the baseline of data for many projects and many uses for years to come. Most importantly, though, this baseline of data will provide the facts that the designated roads network will be created from. This project will ultimately fulfill the mandated requirements of the designated roads system and provide information for a multitude of projects, background for discussions of untold future issues, and the basis for many management decisions in the Gold Butte area for many years to come.

RECOMMENDATIONS

Partners In Conservation recommends that this project go forward, as already approved, into the next biennium. Completion of this project is anticipated to occur during the upcoming biennium. PIC also recommends that the IMC and IMC members become more involved with this project and with the rural communities as a whole by attending some of the workshops wherein specific areas, roads, and issues will be discussed. Interactions with rural residents, discussing their concerns, and considering their suggestions will provide the IMC and IMC members with the opportunity to enhance their personal knowledge of rural issues and allow future decisions to be perhaps more inclusive of rural concerns. At the very least, one-on-one discussions with rural residents will provide IMC members with a deeper knowledge and a clearer understanding of the rural communities of northeast Clark County. More importantly, from PIC's point of view, these personal interactions will demonstrate, to the rural communities, that the IMC and individual IMC members care enough, that the IMC members are 'people' too, and that these personal interactions will help reduce preconceived barriers and prejudices on both sides. In effect, PIC, the rural communities, the IMC and IMC members, all of us become active participants in 'bridging that gap between rural communities and government entities'.