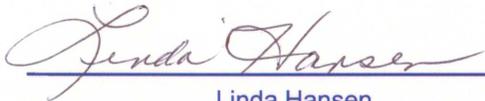


Environmental Assessment



DARPA Grand Challenge



Linda Hansen
California Desert District Manager

**US Department of the Interior
Bureau of Land Management**



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**US Department of Defense
Defense Advanced Research Projects Agency**



December 2003



United States Department of the Interior
BUREAU OF LAND MANAGEMENT



CALIFORNIA DESERT DISTRICT
22835 Calle San Juan de los Lagos
Moreno Valley, CA 92553-9046
(909) 697-5200
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IN REPLY REFER TO:
1791 (CA 068.02)

December 9, 2003

Dear Reader:

Enclosed is the Environmental Assessment (EA) for the Defense Advanced Research Projects Agency's (DARPA) Grand Challenge. DARPA and the Bureau of Land Management (BLM) have cooperatively prepared this EA, as federal co-lead agencies, in accordance with the National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA). This EA includes assessment of four action alternatives and the No Action Alternative.

The purpose of the DARPA Grand Challenge is the military field test of autonomous robotic vehicle technology. The Grand Challenge would be conducted in OHV areas and on designated open routes in the Mojave and Colorado Desert region.

This document is being sent to you for public review and comment prior to the Bureau making its decisions on the proposal. This is your opportunity to provide any input of concern to you. All comments must be received by close of business Friday, January 28, 2004. Please provide information on how to be contacted if you would like to follow-up to resolve or clarify issues, including closures that may affect you. At the end of the comment period, a decision record will be prepared for the Grand Challenge.

Please provide your comments to:

The Bureau of Land Management
California Desert District Office
22835 Calle San Juan de los Lagos
Moreno Valley, CA 92553-9046
Attn: DARPA Comment Coordinator

Thanks for your interest in your public lands.

Sincerely,

Linda Hansen
District Manager

**UNITED STATES DEPARTMENT OF THE INTERIOR
BUREAU OF LAND MANAGEMENT**

ENVIRONMENTAL ASSESSMENT

CONTROL NO.: CA-680-03-58

CASE FILE/SERIAL NO.: CACA 45788/Section 302, FLPMA MOA

PROPONENT: Dept of Defense, DARPA

BLM LEAD OFFICE: Barstow Field Office
2601 Barstow Road
Barstow, CA 92311

Background:

DARPA has requested to utilize public lands and routes to test research vehicles for the advancement of military technology. A Memorandum of Agreement has been signed identifying primary and support agency roles and responsibilities for analysis and conduct of an event. Both federal agencies are participating as co-leads to complete the NEPA analysis and supporting documentation. The Bureau of Land Management has assumed primary oversight for completion of the NEPA document to agency standards, and DOD, DARPA has assumed primary oversight for consultation on the project with the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service.

Proposed Action:

DARPA proposes to conduct a field test of autonomous robotic vehicle technology in OHV areas and open designated routes in the Mojave and Colorado Desert, in order to advance this technology. The field test is designed to be completed during one day of daylight hours, but provisions are included for contingency dates. A federal closure would be imposed on affected routes and areas during the event. Activities in support of the field test include those associated with a start area, finish area, two spectator areas, media observation points, safety and environmental monitors. Each test vehicle will be under the ownership and control of DARPA during the military field test, and will be closely followed by a control vehicle to ensure that the test vehicle stays on the designated route, and does not pose a safety or environmental threat.

Location of Proposed Action:

The Grand Challenge is located within OHV Open Areas in the Mojave and Colorado Desert region of California and Nevada and designated open routes connecting those areas. Route networks comprising the alternatives cover approximately 1,200 miles of routes. The selected route length would be based on the specific route segments selected, with a start point near Barstow and an ending in the vicinity of Las Vegas.

Conformance with Applicable Land Use Plan:

This proposed action is subject to the following Land Use Plans: *California Desert Conservation Area Plan, 1980, (CDCA) as amended* and *Las Vegas Resource Management Plan (LVRMP, 1998)*. The acreage and routes are located in Multiple-Use Class Limited (L), Moderate (M), and Intensive (I) Use areas. Class L lands are managed to provide for generally lower-intensity, carefully controlled multiple use resources, while ensuring that sensitive values are not significantly diminished. Class M lands are managed to provide for a wide variety of present and future uses such as mining, livestock grazing, recreation, energy, and utility development, while conserving desert resources and mitigating damage to those resources which permitted uses may cause. Class I lands are managed to provide concentrated use of lands and resources to meet human needs. Reasonable protection will be provided for sensitive natural and cultural values and mitigation of impacts on resources, including rehabilitation of impacted areas, insofar as possible.

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