

important subactions to designate routes "open," "closed," or "limited;" to reduce route density; and to limit camping to within 15 m (50 ft) from the centerline of a designated open route in MAs were not implemented; or were implemented to a limited degree. The effects of this inaction are discussed under Factor A of the section "Summary of Factors Affecting the Species."

*Planning Action 3: Rehabilitate damaged and degraded habitat in MAs.* BLM staff have been rehabilitating routes inside the Yuha Basin MA. They have focused on proliferation (unauthorized development of new routes by users) and parallel routes off of designated routes; and have rehabilitated approximately 32 to 40 km (20 to 25 mi) of non-designated routes.

*Planning Action 4: Attempt to acquire through exchange, donation, or purchase from willing sellers all private lands within MAs.* Lists prioritizing parcels for acquisition have been maintained by the California OHV Division office headquarters in Sacramento and by BLM's El Centro office. BLM's El Centro office has contacted all landowners within the East Mesa MA to advise them of BLM's desire to acquire their lands through purchase or exchange. Approximately 6,273 ha (15,500 ac) of Arizona State land within the Yuma Desert MA was acquired by the Department of Defense, a signatory to the Management Strategy. Consequently, all land within this MA is owned by signatory agencies. Anza Borrego Desert State Park acquired private lands totaling 299 ha (740 ac) within and adjacent to the Borrego Badlands MA. BLM-El Centro acquired 97 ha (240 ac) within the East Mesa MA and 32 ha (80 ac) within the West Mesa MA. California Department of Transportation has purchased one section (259 ha [640 ac]) in the northern portion of the West Mesa MA as compensation for a project outside the MAs. This section may be conveyed to BLM in the future.

*Planning Action 5: Maintain or establish effective habitat corridors between naturally adjacent populations.* No new corridors have been established, but no new projects were authorized that would block movement across existing corridors between MAs. Currently, MAs that may still be connected by corridors include the Borrego Badlands MA, West Mesa MA, and Yuha MA. An OHV open area and I-8 lie between West Mesa and the Yuha MAs, but two underpasses may facilitate some movement between these MAs. All corridors across the U.S.-Mexico border are currently intact, according to the ICC.

*Planning Action 6: Coordinate activities and funding among the participating agencies and Mexican agencies.* The signatory agencies formed the ICC, which has met quarterly to discuss implementation of planning actions under the Management Strategy. The signatory agencies also formed a Management Oversight Group to provide management-level leadership, coordination, and oversight in the implementation of the Management Strategy. A study to investigate the distribution of flat-tailed horned lizards in Sonora and Baja California, Mexico, was initiated with funding from BOR and BLM.

*Planning Action 7: Promote the purposes of the strategy through law enforcement and public education.* Annual reports (ICC 1999a, ICC 1999b, ICC 2002) stated that insufficient law enforcement personnel were available to prevent most of the illegal off-highway vehicle traffic and illegal dumping that occurs in the West Mesa, Yuha Basin, and East Mesa MAs. The annual reports state that given the funding situation of most of the agencies involved, sufficient law enforcement is unlikely to occur. Information pamphlets addressing the flat-tailed horned lizard were prepared by the CDPR staff at Ocotillo Wells SVRA and Naval Air Facility El Centro and distributed to relevant agencies and the public. Flat-tailed horned lizard signs were posted on most access points into the Yuma Desert and East Mesa MAs. BLM's El Centro office produced range-user brochures and wallet cards to educate all range users of the presence of flat-tailed horned lizards and procedures to avoid impacting lizards and to report any accidental impacts to lizards.

*Planning Action 8: Encourage and support research that will promote the conservation of flat-tailed horned lizards or desert ecosystems and will effectively define and implement necessary management actions, both within and outside of MAs and the Research Area.* Ocotillo Wells SVRA funded four studies (Young 1999, Setser and Young 2000, Setser 2001, and Gardner 2002) to collect information on flat-tailed horned lizard demographics, habitat use, and the effects of OHV activity. Various sampling methodologies to assess population trends were tested. ICC members consulted with Colorado State University regarding monitoring population trends. Flat-tailed horned lizard life history and demographic data were collected by several researchers from Utah State University. In 2001, BLM's El Centro office conducted a pilot CMR study that led to a population

estimate study in 2002 for the Yuha Basin MA. Tissue samples were taken from the disjunct populations throughout the range of the flat-tailed horned lizard and are to be analyzed by Utah State University to determine any genetic differences between populations.

*Planning Action 9: Continue Inventory and Monitoring.* BLM's Palm Springs office conducted surveys in the Coachella Valley. Surveys were also conducted across Baja Norte and Sonora, Mexico, with the help of ICC personnel and funding from BOR and BLM. Additional surveys were conducted along the peripheral areas of the Borrego Badlands MA. Surveys of flat-tailed horned lizards and their scat continued on MAs each year between 1997 and 2001. ICC annual reports monitored the habitat loss authorized by Management Strategy/CA signatories. The Navy contracted Tierra Data Systems in 1997 to take aerial photographs and digitally map the five MAs and the Research Area to document habitat loss and disturbance. The El Centro BLM office quantified vehicular impacts at a finer resolution than Tierra Data Systems by using a step-point method on the West Mesa, Yuha Basin, and East Mesa MAs. A similar analysis was conducted in the Yuma MA by the Service and the Arizona Game and Fish Department.

In conclusion, while the Management Strategy has resulted in actions that provide protections for the flat-tailed horned lizard and has contributed to reductions in particular threats to the species (see Factor D below), the stated objectives of the Management Strategy have not yet been fully achieved. Specifically, the four of the Management Strategy's priority 1 planning subactions have not been fully implemented. These are the following: (1) Finalizing the designations of the MAs; (2) reducing route densities in MAs; (3) signing routes closed, limited, or open; and (4) providing adequate law enforcement.

*Comment 4:* One commenter stated that one of the management areas is within the boundaries of an ORV Open Area (Ocotillo Wells SVRA) and asked what has been done on the ground in the Ocotillo Wells SVRA to actually protect the lizard's habitat.

*Our Response:* None of the Management Areas contains OHV open areas. The Ocotillo Wells SVRA is designated as a Research Area and is not a designated Management Area under the Management Strategy. The Ocotillo Wells SVRA was not established to protect the flat-tailed horned lizard's habitat. It is one of six State Vehicular Recreation Areas within California that