

2014 NATIONAL DEFENSE AUTHORIZATION ACT

Johnson Valley & Twentynine Palms Marine Corps Base Provision

Summary

A provision to expand the Marine Corps Air Ground Combat Center, Twentynine Palms, CA and preserve off-highway vehicle (OHV) access to Johnson Valley is contained in Subtitle C of the National Defense Authorization Act (NDAA) of 2014. Leaders of the House and Senate Armed Service Committees announced an agreement on the NDAA on December 9, 2013. The U.S. House of Representatives approved the bill on Dec. 12. The U.S. Senate is set to ratify the bill in the week of Dec. 15, and to be signed into law by President Obama.

The off-highway motorized recreation community considers this ground-breaking provision a “win” for both the OHV community and the United States Marine Corps. As a result, Johnson Valley will be designated by Congress as the “Johnson Valley Off-Highway Vehicle Recreation Area,” under the continued management of the U.S. Bureau of Land Management (BLM).

Highlights

- The provision creates the “Johnson Valley Off-Highway Vehicle Recreation Area,” providing federal protection to an area established in 1980 for OHV recreation by the State of California. It is the first time an OHV area has been provided national recognition.
- Three land areas have been designated for specific types of use: 1) Johnson Valley OHV Area 2) Shared Use Area 3) Exclusive Military Use Area. [see map]
 - The “Johnson Valley Off-Highway Vehicle Recreation Area” includes:
 - 43,431 acres of the existing area
 - 53,231 acres (Shared Use Area)
 - 96,662 total acreage
 - The Marine Corps’ Military Use & Shared Use Areas include:
 - ❖ Exclusive Military Use Area:
 - 78,993 acres (west)
 - 18,704 acres (south)
 - 97, 697 total acreage
 - ❖ Shared Use Area
 - 53, 231 total acres
- The Marine Corps shall provide access between the two non-contiguous areas included in the Johnson Valley OHV Recreation Area (northeast corner of OHV Area).
- The Exclusive Military Use Area boundary shall be clearly identified and maintained by the Marine Corps (ex: fences). The Marine Corps shall be permitted to engage in large-scale, live-fire field training exercises on this land at any time during the year.

- The Shared Use Area will be available to the Marine Corps for training twice a year for 30 days (60 days total). The Shared Use Area shall otherwise be available for public recreation at all other times.
- The Shared Use Area shall be managed by the BLM except for those times when the Marine Corps is conducting its training exercises.
- Dud-producing ordnance (artillery shells, bombs, etc.) will be prohibited in the Shared Use Area.
- The Marine Corps is permitted to set-aside two “Company Objective Areas” within the Shared Use Area for special needs associated with its semi-annual training exercises. Each area will be no larger than 22 acres and the Marine Corps shall be permitted to use small, short-range explosives on this land when training. Nevertheless, an ordnance disposal team will sweep the area after the training exercise to confirm removal of any hazards.
- Military vehicles may be permitted to transit the Johnson Valley OHV Recreation Area during training exercise periods.
- A “Resource Management Group” will be established by the Secretary of the Navy (Marine Corps) and Secretary of the Interior (BLM) to determine the location of the Company Objective Areas and coordinate management of the lands.
- The Marine Corps and BLM will seek input from state agencies and the OHV, recreation and environmental communities regarding land use issues, such as recreational use within the Shared Use Area.
- The entire land-use provision expires on March 31, 2039.