

1982
BLM Releases Henry Mountains Management Framework Plan

BLM’s resource specialists recommend that the Factory Butte area* be closed to cross-country ORV use to protect “recognized geologic, historic, scientific, scenic, and recreational values.” BLM specialists also recommend designating the area as an Area of Critical Environmental Concern. BLM does not follow these recommendations, but commits to monitor and study the area to determine if a closure is warranted.

2005
SUWA Closure Petition

SUWA files a petition requesting BLM close the Factory Butte area to cross-country ORV use, citing “considerable adverse effects” to a number of sensitive resources. BLM agrees that ORV use is causing considerable adverse effects to threatened and endangered plant species.

2007
BLM Richfield field office draft Resource Management Plan

BLM’s Richfield field office releases its draft resource management plan, which recommends closure of Factory Butte area to cross-country ORV use to protect rare and important visual, soil, geology and threatened and endangered species resources.

2009-2017
Monitoring

SUWA documents non-compliance with closure order. BLM monitoring shows increase in closure order violations in 2017-18 after years of declining violations. Monitoring also shows decline in number of living cacti, including “dramatic mortality” since 2014

1982-1999
Failed Monitoring

BLM fails to perform the required monitoring even as ORV use greatly expands throughout the region. ORV use causes dramatic visual scars and resource damage. ORVs accelerate erosion by four times the natural rate in the area.

2006
Closure Order

After additional inventories confirm that cross-country ORV use is impacting threatened and endangered plants, BLM closes much of Factory Butte area to cross-country ORV use.

2008
BLM Richfield field office final Resource Management Plan

BLM decides to open the 5,400 acres at issue to cross-country ORV use despite acknowledging that ORV use is causing and will cause “considerable adverse effects” to threatened and endangered plant species. This is the first time the public learns of this decision – after the public comment period has ended.

2019
BLM Lifts ORV Closure Order

After more than 12 years, BLM lifts its 5,400 acre cross-country OHV closure at Factory Butte. BLM takes this action despite declines in cacti populations and a decided uptick in closure violations. BLM does not provide prior notice of this decision or an opportunity for public input.

* The term “Factory Butte area” as used in this timeline includes but is not limited to the 5,400 acres opened by BLM in May 2019 to cross-country ORV use. It does not include “Swing Arm City,” a nearby 2,600 acre area where cross-country ORV use is allowed.