



TOWN OF APPLE VALLEY

TOWN COUNCIL STAFF REPORT

To: Honorable Mayor and Town Council **Date:** May 28, 2013

From: Council Member Barb Stanton **Item No:** 4
Apple Valley Town Council

Subject: ADOPT RESOLUTION NO. 2013-20, A RESOLUTION IN SUPPORT OF H.R. 1676, THE JOHNSON VALLEY NATIONAL OFF HIGHWAY VEHICLE RECREATION AREA ESTABLISHMENT ACT

T.M. Approval: _____

Budgeted Item: Yes No N/A

RECOMMENDED ACTION:

Adopt Resolution No 2013-20, a Resolution In Support of H.R. 1676, the Johnson Valley National Off Highway Vehicle Recreation Area Establishment Act

SUMMARY:

In early 2013 the Department of the Navy and the U.S. Marine Corps issued a record of decision on the proposed expansion of the Marine Corps Air Ground Combat Center (MCAGCC) at Twentynine Palms, California. Their proposal would transfer 120,000 acres of Johnson Valley Off-Highway Vehicle area to exclusive military use and another 40,000 acres to shared use. The purpose is to conduct a brigade-level expeditionary force exercise of about 15,000 troops twice a year. In the exclusive use areas the exercise would combine air and land live-fire.

Johnson Valley OHV area is the largest open off-highway vehicle area in the country, totaling nearly 189,000 acres. It is managed by the U.S. Bureau of Land Management (BLM) and offers year-round recreation that attracts all kinds of outdoor enthusiasts. The area is also home to numerous events that draw thousands of competitors and spectators – up to thirty thousand in a single week. BLM estimates that Johnson Valley OHV area generates \$71.5 million annually to the local economy and \$191.2 million to the national economy. The area also includes several iron mines that could provide significant economic benefit in the future.

While the Department of the Navy claims it requires Johnson Valley land to perform new and different military exercises, their budget – greatly diminished through sequestration and other reductions – will almost certainly not allow funding for these exercises. In February, Chairman of the Joint Chiefs Martin Dempsey testified before the House Armed Services Committee that the military cannot fulfill their current mission if even one more dollar is cut. With deep cuts now in place, a costly purchase of Johnson Valley land, and plans for expensive new exercises, is imprudent and could further impede their ability to achieve their current mission.

Scrapppers have always been a problem at the MCAGCC, coming on to the base to retrieve valuable metals left behind from exploded and unexploded ordnance. It is not uncommon to see Explosive Ordnance Disposal teams defusing dangerous materials removed from the base. These incursions could greatly increase if the Marines expand into an area that has grown exponentially in popularity among the recreation community. The capabilities of today's off-high vehicles have changed the question from *if* civilians can gain access to the base, to *when*. The military has not done an adequate job of planning for that eventuality.

H.R. 1676, as proposed by Congressman Cook, would preserve the Johnson Valley OHV area for recreation by making it the *first* National Off-highway Vehicle Recreation Area in the nation. It preserves all existing uses of the land, including several active mines. Second, the bill instructs BLM to authorize the Department of the Navy to use the land twice annually for up to 42 days, and bars them from using dud-producing ordnance that would functionally condemn the land for any other use.

Given the absolutely vital role Johnson Valley OHV area plays in the local economy, and the very real safety risks associated with the expansion, H.R. 1676 is the best and most equitable solution.

Based on the foregoing, staff recommends adoption of the form motion.

RESOLUTION NO. 2013-20

A RESOLUTION IN SUPPORT OF H.R. 1676, THE JOHNSON VALLEY NATIONAL OFF HIGHWAY VEHICLE RECREATION AREA ESTABLISHMENT ACT

THE TOWN COUNCIL OF THE TOWN OF APPLE VALLEY, CALIFORNIA, DOES RESOLVE, DECLARE, DETERMINE AND ORDER AS FOLLOWS:

WHEREAS, the Bureau of Land Management designated Johnson Valley Off Highway Vehicle area is a vital economic resource to the Inland Empire and High Desert, contributing \$71.5 million annually to the local economy and \$191.2 million to the national economy; and

WHEREAS, the Department of the Navy and the United States Marine Corps identified Johnson Valley Off Highway Vehicle area as their preferred location for a new large scale training exercise at the Marine Corps Air Ground Combat Center; and

WHEREAS, the proposed training exercise would permanently deny access for recreation; and

WHEREAS, such a loss of land for recreation would be a catastrophic loss for a region that relies so heavily on the tourism and recreation business that Johnson Valley Off Highway Vehicle area attracts; and

WHEREAS, incursions could greatly increase at the Marine Corps Air Ground Combat Center if it expands into an area that has grown exponentially in popularity among the recreation community; and

WHEREAS, the capabilities of today's off-highway vehicles make it difficult to deny them access; and

WHEREAS, the military has not done an adequate job of planning for that eventuality; and

WHEREAS, Congressman Paul Cook introduced H.R. 1676, the Johnson Valley National Off Highway Vehicle Recreation Area Establishment Act, to protect Johnson Valley OHV from being taken over by the Department of the Navy and the United States Marine Corps; and

WHEREAS, this legislation will protect the local economy as well as public safety.

NOW THEREFORE BE IT RESOLVED THAT:

1. The Town Council of the Town of Apple Valley opposes the Department of the Navy and the United States Marine Corps use of land identified as Johnson Valley Off Highway Vehicle area as their preferred location for a new large scale training exercise at the Marine Corps Air Ground Combat Center.
2. The Town Council of the Town of Apple Valley recognizes that such a loss of land for recreation would be a catastrophic loss for a region that relies so heavily on the tourism and recreation business that Johnson Valley Off Highway Vehicle area attracts.
3. The Town Council of the Town of Apple Valley is in support of H.R. 1676, The Johnson Valley National Off Highway Vehicle Recreation Area Establishment Act.

PASSED, APPROVED AND ADOPTED THIS 28th DAY OF MAY 2013.

Curt Emick, Mayor

ATTEST:

La Vonda M-Pearson, Town Clerk

(SEAL)