

Club wraps up mineshaft fencing, plans abandon vehicle removal

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Havasu 4 Wheelers, a local off-road club, continued efforts Thursday to fence more open vertical mine shafts in desert areas near Lake Havasu City.

The third excursion wrapped up the 2012 effort and boosts the number of secured vertical mines in the area to seventeen open mine shafts in five different mining areas. Overall, including years past, the group has secured 25 mine shafts.

"We really pumped up the effort, really expanded it this year," said club member Bruce Speirs. Previous undertakings in 2012 were Jan. 24 and March 6.

Areas included Jupiter Mines, about seven miles from Havasu, and on the south slope of the Mohave Mountains, which are immediately east of Havasu. Jupiter Mines consists of two mine sites about a mile apart. Another area, on the west slope of the Mohave Mountains and situated north and east of Bison Boulevard, encompassed closures at J&J Mine and Unnamed Mine, Speirs said.

The project, in its third year, is a partnership with Bureau of Land Management. It focuses on closing off mine shafts that present major hazards to inattentive desert visitors. Hazards include suffocation from poisonous gases, fall injuries, shaft cave-ins, and harmful health effects from bat guano, according to earlier reports. In the partnership, BLM supplies the materials, such as the steel posts and guide wires.

The project also is subsidized by a \$500 grant through non-profit organization, Tread Lightly. According to www.treadlightly.org, the group's mission is to promote responsible outdoor recreation through ethics education and stewardship programs. Havasu 4 Wheelers member Bruce Speirs said the Havasu grant is an example of a stewardship program. The club pays \$250 annual dues to Tread Lightly each year, he said.

"We were going to do this anyway," Speirs said. "(The grant) defers costs such as gas, tools, and generator use."

THE HISTORY

About five years ago, Havasu 4 Wheelers organized a yearly desert clean-up project.

"It was one day a year," Speirs said. "We would pick a notoriously dirty part of the desert and get a bunch of volunteers together, and clean it up."

The volunteers amounted to about 75 strong for the event, but the core membership group wanted to do more. They approached BLM and inquired about other needs they had pertaining to desert clean up. Fencing open mine shafts and junk car problems were at the top of the wish list, Speirs said.

BLM has an annually mandated program to collaborate with local organizations, he said. "We fit into their niche with filling collaboration goals," he said. "Before starting any of this (mine fencing efforts), we had to survey each of the mines because each one has its hazards."

The volunteer surveyors went a step further to assess materials and manpower needed for the job and to project a potential schedule for completion.

WHAT'S NEXT

The club's last cleanup effort centers on removing five junk cars from nearby desert areas. The work is scheduled April 11. After the effort, the club's cleanup effort goes dark because of extreme summer temperatures.

In the fall of 2012, club members are set to begin surveying open mine shafts for next year's round of mine shaft closures in the Buck Mountains. Speirs said the Buck Mountains are detached from the Mohave Mountains and situated about four miles northeast of the Mohaves. They can most easily be seen if travelling east on Interstate 40, and are accessed from the Franconia Road exit off Interstate 40.

You may contact the reporter at jhanson@havasunews.com.



Havasu 4 Wheelers work Thursday to fence open vertical mine shafts in desert areas near Lake Havasu City during an extended effort and partnership with Bureau of Land Management. Submitted photo