

Judge rejects federal plan for SoCal desert routes

The Associated Press

Posted: 09/30/2009 07:18:17 AM PDT

Updated: 09/30/2009 07:18:18 AM PDT

LOS ANGELES—A federal judge has sided with environmentalists who challenged a U.S. Bureau of Land Management plan allowing some 5,000 miles of off-road vehicle routes in Southern California's Mojave Desert.

U.S. District Judge Susan Illston ruled Monday that the West Mojave plan approved by the bureau in 2006 did not follow rules intended to minimize effects on waterways, soils, plants, animals and nearby private property.

The ruling came in response to a legal challenge brought by Center for Biological Diversity and other conservation groups.

Bureau officials defended their plan in a statement after Illston's ruling as "one of the most collaborative and extensive planning efforts ever undertaken in California."

Illston set an Oct. 30 conference to discuss further steps for accommodating off-roaders.