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## Still fighting over Mojave Preserve

***Our view: County's lawsuit over road access seems largely pointless.***

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The Mojave National Preserve was created to protect a huge swath of the Mojave Desert and keep it in trust as a vital public resource. But it seems to have only accelerated the controversy between environmentalists and those who say they've been shut out of public lands.

Chief among the latter, apparently, are county supervisors, who are suing for title to 14 roads. But the lawsuit comes out of left field. It's hard to see what exactly the county is hoping to preserve, other than some bogus claim to power over the preserve.

The county sued the U.S. Department of the Interior in October, using an 1866 mining law to claim it owns most of the roads in the preserve - a tactic used across the West to gain access to lands that have been closed to mining, grazing and offroading in order to preserve them.

New Supervisor Brad Mitzelfelt, whose 1st District includes the preserve, claims it is the county's duty to guard its right to use the roads - so that "none could be arbitrarily closed or excessively restricted." But it seems a false premise. And a battle that is arbitrary in itself, because it is so unnecessary.

"Is it that critical to gain control over the roads?" asks Kristin Brengel of the Wilderness

Society. "These roads aren't going anywhere. Why is the county spending this money, when there's no chance the National Park Service will shut them down?"

The county's suit sure looks like the road to nowhere. We'd agree with the feds that the court should just dismiss it.

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