

Title: AREA 51 HIGHWAY SERIOUS BUSINESS
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Area 51 watcher Glenn Campbell isn't expecting Nevada's new Extraterrestrial Highway" to attract any ETs, but he fears the remote roadway will trap hapless Earth-bound tourists in natural and man-made dangers.

Gov. Bob Miller designated State Route 375, running about 100 miles through south-central Nevada, as the "Extraterrestrial Highway" after the state Transportation Board approved the name change in February.

South and west of the highway, the Air Force operates the top-secret Groom Lake air base, known as Area 51, where the government has developed such exotic aircraft as the U2 spy plane, SR-71 Blackbird and F-117A Stealth fighter. The base is also thought by many UFO buffs to contain the bodies of aliens recovered from crash sites.

The lure of possible UFOs leads many people to hang out on public land around the base, where there is no fence and poor markers to warn them that they are near a sensitive military area, said Campbell, director of the Area 51 Research Center in Rachel, population 100.

"Instead of accurately portraying this as a harsh desert area, the state is putting an appealing label on it," Campbell said, "making the area seem gentle and attractive instead of dangerous."

Campbell has witnessed base security officers confiscating film and video equipment from television crews. He was arrested and convicted of a misdemeanor for obstructing an officer during one media visit.

There's danger to visitors from Mother Nature, as well, he said. Ordinary cars may get stuck in off-road sand or people unfamiliar with the desert may drive into the middle of nowhere without water. Last year, five people died in Southern Nevada's desert areas from heat exposure and lack of water.

"This has happened to perhaps a half-dozen people in my time here," said Campbell, who moved to Rachel near the secret military base in 1981.

To warn tourists about the hidden dangers in the desert, Campbell asked state officials to post more warning signs with specific dangers, modify the state's trespassing laws and resolve warrantless film seizures by rural sheriff's deputies on behalf of armed guards at the base.

Miller appeared on national television Monday to announce the designated highway. The Nevada Transportation Department will post "Extraterrestrial Highway" signs costing \$3,300, Miller said, including at least one pointing skyward to welcome any out-of-this-world visitors.

"The designation of Highway 375 as the Extraterrestrial Highway serves to accentuate the sense of mystery that pervades a stretch of this road," Miller said. "This is a tourist attraction and I don't believe for a minute that anyone visiting the highway and its immediate area should be concerned about being bothered by security personnel." The governor noted that 87 percent of Nevada is owned by the federal government and the state contains many military installations.

"So I don't feel there's a need to make a particular issue out of the ET Highway and its immediate public access land area," he said.

The Extraterrestrial Highway runs from Hiko to Warm Springs, drawing about 50 vehicles a day. Campbell said he felt responsible for the highway's special designation. In 1993 he published "The Area 51 Viewer's Guide" calling State Route 375 "America's Alien Highway."

Although he's camped in the hills surrounding Groom Lake and joins the UFO spotters in Rachel twice a year, Campbell said he has never seen anything unexplainable in the skies above the obscure rural road.

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Correction: Campbell moved to Nevada in 1993, not 1981 as stated in article.