

PUBLIC LANDS ROUNDTABLE MINUTES

Meeting Location: BLM Ridgecrest Office

Minutes of: September 28, 2023

Called to order at: 6:02pm by Chairman Mark Dunn

PLRT MEMBERS IN ATTENDANCE: John Auburn, Mark Dunn, Mary Grimsley, Arzell Hale, Charley Hattendorf, Bev Hill, Francis Kuttor (and Pedro, seeing eye dog in training), Will Liebscher, Mark Mason, Steven Rainey, Hector Vialobos, Libby Vincent, and BLM Ridgecrest Field Manager Tom Bickauskas came in later after attending the IWV Water Board Meeting.

Guests: Heather Dunn, George Croll.

Pledge of allegiance was led by Mary Grimsley.

Mark made an announcement that someone (unnamed) does not want to host our meetings anymore because he felt that people were very disrespectful to him. Mark apologized to him. Mark made it clear that if someone is being disrespectful to anyone, they will be given a warning, and if it happens again they will be asked to leave the meeting and the group they represent will be notified that they need a replacement. It is a privilege to attend these meetings and is not owed to anyone.

A discussion ensued and no one could remember any kind of disrespect. It did not happen at the last meeting, AND, it happened "in the building" (not necessarily during the meeting). Charlie also mentioned that he had just learned that this is the ONLY group throughout the Field Offices that meets like this, so we are definitely very privileged to have this.

Steven Rainey mentioned that there is a group similar to this, the Emergency Services Committee with the Ridgecrest Police Department and we meet once a month at Kerr McGee, about 80 participants. If anyone would like to join them, email Steven and he will send you a newsletter.

A MOTION was made by Charlie Hattendorf, 2nd by Libby Vincent to approve the August 24, 2023 minutes. They were approved as sent.

BLM UPDATES: by Dana Stephenson, Assistant Ridgecrest Field Manager

Dana introduced herself: she oversees minerals, reality, wild horse & burro, and geothermal. She has been with BLM for over 20 years starting in law enforcement, went to outdoor recreation planner (Glamis, the Hammers, etc.), and is now the Assistant Ridgecrest Field Manager.

WILD HORSE & BURRO: The gather is back on after being cancelled because of the impending storm in the Palo Verde and Picacho area down by El Centro. They have caught 84 out of the 175 burros that they were contracted to do. It has now been suspended because the burros are retreating back into the uplands, but they are still working in the Picacho area where they are creating a safety hazard.

MINING:

+ We're in the last 2 weeks of the Conglomerate Mesa comment period which ends October 15.

IWGA - PIPELINE: BLM is trying to get the scoping out for the pre-project. They will put it out on E-planning when they get the info for the POD (Plan of Development). They will take all the comments from the SEQA documents and implement that into the NEPA process. They are planning on doing their own scoping.

MIDDLE MILE BROAD BAND PROJECT: This is a state-wide project. Ridgecrest BLM will be doing 3 rights-of-way for the project: a joint one with Bakersfield, a joint one with Barstow, and one for the Ridgecrest area.

WEMO:

+ Is still in litigation and they cannot talk about it.

MISCELLANEOUS:

+ Fiscal year ends tomorrow (September 29) and working into their new budget, working on positions and how much money they will receive.

+ Asked for feed-back on how the DAC tour went. She helped pre-run it. There will be a new contact to reach out to to schedule another tour of the geothermal area on base sometime in the near future for those who did not make it onto the list. All favorable comments.

+ Libby Vincent commented on the DAC meeting held on Saturday, that she learned some valuable info and requested a copy of the DAC meeting report.

+ Charlie Hattendorf made the comment on what a terrific presentation Randy Banis did on presenting the DAC and how it works.

FLOOD DAMAGE: BLM is still checking out the damage. Trona Road just into Inyo County has a washout. BLM is asking for public's help to let them know areas of concern + photos.

GOVERNMENT SHUTDOWN:

+ General info on how the shutdown would affect BLM operations. Law enforcement and the Wild Horse & Burro facility would be exempt as they are considered essential.

LADWP WATER RELEASE:

+ Charlie asked about the Freeman Gulch release area which has flooded areas along & on the Red Rock/Inyokern Road and if there is any concern about habitat impact? Dana replied yes, that DWP has contractors that monitor the runoff and have to send reports, and if they find any rodents that have drown, they have to report immediately. They send a report every Friday to the BLM and let them know what is going on. As of today, all of the water release has been shut down.

+ BLM Field Manager Tom Bickauskas just came from the IWVGA policy advisory committee meeting and introduced George Croll who has replaced Don Zdeba at the IWV Water District. George introduced himself as an avid rock crawler, has been here for about 2 weeks from Santa Maria.

+ Will Liebscher mentioned that he turned in his resignation to the Rand Water District Board.

+ Mary gave a report on a trip made into Panamint Valley to check out the PVD trails. The Trona Road has electronic signs saying that Death Valley is closed. So when we got to the road closed sign just across the Inyo County line, we interpreted it as yes, DV is closed, but were going to Panamint Valley. There is damage along the paved Nadeau Road, one major and the rest minor, all marked with cones. We went down the dirt road to camp which is too rough for an RV right now, and intersected the Panamint Springs Road. We drove north to the Minnetta Road, turned west and went to Stone Canyon, which was a river bed. We had to go around one 4' gully, made it to Fall Zero, then continued on to the Defense Mine. The canyon going to Defense is a rocky canyon, and it still is. The road to Lookout City has no problems at all. No washouts or gullies crossing it, no damage. The road up to Wildrose was not closed at the intersection. Libby said that the gate has been moved from the intersection to a couple of miles up the road towards the narrows.

+ We also discussed how long Death Valley would be closed because of so much flood damage in the valley and how long before they able to go out and check the Panamint canyons.

NEW BUSINESS:

+ New members & substitute member requests – Bev Hill has submitted her request, but Sam Merk has her letter on her computer, but her computer is out of order.

+ The question was asked by Charlie regarding how many alternates are allowed. Right now, with Bev Hill applying as an alternate for Maturango Museum, that would give them 3. However, Libby added that Barbara Bain technically represents Archeology, not the Museum even though she is also from the Museum. Quail Unlimited also has 2 alternates. Executive committee needs to discuss this and possibly make a change to the By-Laws.

+ Hector Villalobos has a person interested in being the alternate for Kerncrest Audubon Society. Sherry Brubaker is a board member and would like to be the alternate.

OLD BUSINESS:

+ We discussed the opening of the checking account at Navy Federal Credit Union. All signers must be present. Also, we need an address to put on the checks. Asked Tom but he declined. We talked about the Treasurer's or an individual's address, but when that changes new checks would need to be ordered, so that doesn't work. Francis then suggested that we just have a petty cash and no checking account. Being involved in other non-profits she suggested that a petty cash would work best. Also, we are not a 501(c)(3). We have \$110 now in an envelope.

+ Possible topics for next meeting. Liam would like to do a presentation on the Desert Tortoise. Also, it was suggested that we get the Kern County Sheriff's Department to speak regarding shooting in Shooters Canyon or invite the environmental person from the base to talk about the Big Horn Sheep population on base.

+ Mark asked about a field trip to Cerro Gordo. October was discussed, but no date could be decided upon that was not good for Tom. November is getting too cold and could run into snow, so no field trip until next spring.

NEXT PLR MEMBERSHIP MEETING

+ Next PLRT meeting will be 10/26/23.

Adjourned at: 7:13pm

Respectfully submitted,
Mary Grimsley

Mark Dunn can be reached at: 760-876-0999

Charlie Hattendorf can be reached at: hidesert@gmail.com

Sam can be reached by phone @: 760-793-0050.

Mary Grimsley by email at: maranjer@gmail.com

EXECUTIVE MEETING:

ATTENDING: Mark Dunn, Sam Merk, Mary Grimsley, Charley Hattendorf, & Liam Connolly

TOPICS FOR FUTURE MEETINGS:

- + Liam would like to do a Desert Tortoise presentation
- + Invite Kern County Sheriff to address shooting at Shooters Canyon
- + Invite environmental person from the base to talk about the Big Horn Sheep population on base
- + Adjustment of By-Laws
- + Make amendment to wilderness plan to adjust the boundary for the Osborne Cabin