

PUBLIC LANDS ROUNDTABLE MINUTES

Meeting Location: BLM Ridgecrest Office

Minutes of: January 25, 2024

Called to order at: 6:15pm by Vice-Chair Charlie Hattendorf

Pledge of allegiance was led by Arzell Hale.

PLRT MEMBERS IN ATTENDANCE: John Auburn, Barbara Bane, Kayla Brown, Liam Connolly, Mary Grimsley, Arzell Hale, Charlie Hattendorf, Bev Hill, Will Liebscher, Mark Mason, Sam Merk, Hector Vialobos, and Tom Bickauskas BLM.

Guests: Greg Conde, George Croll, Sue Mason, Hyman Jain, Friends of the Inyo

A MOTION was made by John Auburn, 2nd by Mark Mason to approve the December 7, 2023 minutes. They were approved as corrected. Mary added that there 35 pages of transcript, so she is not sure which is better, the transcript or listening to almost 2 hours of audio. In the transcript, there were some very bizarre sentences that she questioned what was being discussed. Here are two of the sentences that I copied out of the transcript by the Guest speaker:

- **Page 7:** *"no doubt about it you look at Giant pumpkin pets that are teaching relief reaching heavy metals there's environmental disasters ..."*
- **Page 7:** *"how we refine and extract minerals is continuously changing and when you look at my development sure we're in the African States right now."*
- **Page 26:** *"congratulations like you're the Stuckey officially thank you all very much speed and the celebrating to bring donuts next talking I was going to say yeah now I'm in charge to Refreshments is that much right her in charge of food"*
- **Page 28:** *"two strap and yeah I'm just saying that maybe what we do with this one we need to move a little bit but the chain part down the road a little bit if you have any old tire chains or really good yeah because they're right across from each other and it's just a little bit so we need to slide this one down it'll make it a little before doors and the LJ's there was one other thing and but I that went out the window nobody talked about something else so really."*
- **Page 30:** *"Bill's friend got broken into up in Johannesburg and ain't coming yeah over they said we'll do a phone report I mean they got into all the containers and all those they just they just forgot the menu last two words what do we do with his bodies we'll be right there that's right oh my goodness yeah somebody's in my house in that way you know what Donnie just also if anybody's interested on"*

We briefly discussed using just the audio and not the AI transcript.

BLM UPDATES: by Tom Bickauskas, Ridgecrest Field Manager

SILVER PEAK PROJECT: The Transition Lines Remediation Ratings (TLRR) project or raising of the power lines from Bishop to Dyer, NV comment period ends February 12. Post cards were available as part of the public scoping. Public meeting were held. The draft for the Bishop to Ivanpah TLRR should be out for comment this summer sometime.

CONGLOMERATE MESA: BLM is working on alternatives and plan to have the draft EIS out by end of summer.

IWV GROUNDWATER AUTHORITY: The pipeline proposed to go from California City to Ridgecrest; the BLM is still waiting on archeological studies to get approval to issue the permit to the GA where they can drill the boring holes in March. The draft EA for the Bullfrog pipeline could be available as soon as the end of April.

MIDDLE MILE PROJECT: The basic concept is to get high speed internet to all corners of the US. This project is being managed by Cal Trans. The Ridgecrest office has 3 of them; along Hwy 14; 178 through Walker Pass to the Ridgecrest/Bakersfield boundary; Hwy 190 through to Death Valley NP and Barstow. For field work management, BLM is in the review process.

RED MOUNTAIN CIRCLE: The BLM is a month away from removing tailings washing down Red Mtn. Wash towards Cuddeback. There is a high concentration of arsenic.

OHV GRANTS MEETING: Before our PLRT meeting on February 22, the BLM will be holding their Restoration Grants workshop at 4:30pm. Governmental Stake Holders for 45 minutes to comment on the grant operations. From 5:15 to 6:00pm we were invited as well as the public to attend and comment on the three OHV grants that the BLM applies for every year: Ground Operations, Law Enforcement, and Restoration grants. The BLM pretty much do the same things every year, but move the projects around.

LAW ENFORCEMENT: Were very busy between the holidays of Christmas & New Year. Rangers conducted several traffic stops in the Dove Springs, Jawbone Canyon and Randsburg areas. Several warnings and very expensive citations were issued for operating an OHV without a helmet, operating an OHV on the highway, an OHV with blue lights, unregistered OHV's. BLM ranger was flagged down by San Bernardino Sheriffs in the Red Mtn area to provide perimeter security while a felony arrest warrant was served. The suspect was taken into custody without incident. A ranger responded to a medical on EP-110, followed by a single motorcycle crash that resulted in a broken leg (patient was transported to Antelope Valley Hospital by ambulance). A ranger assisted Search & Rescue of a stranded motorist (car became disabled) in the Scodie Mtn area and provided assistance to a family member to the location.

ROAD CONDITIONS: Panamint Mtns.: Pleasant Canyon is being worked on by the Park Service. South Park is passable to Chicken Rock. Park Service should be finished in the next 2 weeks.

+ BLM has graded the main roads in the Radamacher Hills south of the college, and graded the boundary roads.

Road to Ayer's Rock is being worked on by stake holders.

+ Someone _____ brought up that the parking area at the end of South Downs that was graded, seems to use on a regular basis on Friday, Saturday, and Sunday nights, and when she walks her dog there on Monday mornings she picks up trash left behind (needles, bottles, condoms, underwear).

+ It was brought up by _____ that the Sheep Springs Road need to be worked on. Right now the sand is pretty deep for passenger-type SUV's to traverse.

+ Mary Grimsley asked for a friend from Keeler, the road going up Mazurka Canyon where it crosses a ditch, and DWP came in and put in a culvert and covered it up with dirt and made a nice crossing. They did the same thing where the road crosses over to the Reward Mine, but there are other roads that DWP refuses to fix the crossings. The Bishop office pretty much refuses to get involved and says that DWP can do whatever they want on their property, however these are all routes of travel that have been in use for years & years & years, so what is DWP's responsibility? DWP can't be forced to fix them, however, California has prescriptive rights, but you would need to go to a land lawyer. The Bishop office puts a lot of work into the Alabama Hills.

+ Sam Merk about when the Cal Trans work on Hwy 190 between Olancho & 136 might be finished and if the BLM could put any pressure on them to get it finished sooner than later. Weather plays a part in when asphalt can be laid. Tom mentioned the road from Baker to Death Valley being washed out and the popularity of the Dumont Dunes.

DVNP ZOOM: Charlie Hattendorf asked Tom about Death Valley joining our meeting via ZOOM? Tom said they are not opposed to the idea, just need the name of the person to talk to.

LAND SWAP: Charlie also asked about a land swap where the City of Ridgecrest asked for some lands out around the intersection of 395 and China Lake Blvd / Brown Road? Does he have any maps; maps were terrible with no details. Charlie was told to ask the city. Sam Merk went to the City Council meeting regarding this, and stated that they need to show these plans to the public and show more transparency. Barbara Bane stated that a lot of people use the public parking area, the horse people, people walk & jog from there, it's the takeoff point for 4 or 5 different roads, and they are planning on taking all 4 corners so that they can capture the market.

DEEP ROSE: Hector Villalobos asked about drilling, possibly on the State parcel? They are not real good about telling the BLM what is going on; something about burying a pipeline under the road. Hector also questioned about the geothermal drilling?

BURRO GATHERING: Guest Greg Conde asked if any gathers were planned off the base. Tom: no gathers are planned right now. Plans are to gather all of them as burros are not compatible to the Navy's mission. Capacity at the Ridgecrest facility is 1,000 animals.

PORTUGUESE BENCH: Barbara Bane has heard that the Archeological Conservancy has bought a parcel up on Portuguese Bench up by Coso where there is quite a large archeological site and is planning a lot of work there and have hired a contractor. She understands that this site bleeds over into BLM land and was asking if Tom was aware of this? She has grave concerns with the contractor that they have hired for the project. She does not feel he is a reputable contractor, which is her concern, as he won't be able to stop at the boundary once he gets started.

STAFFING: We have no Geologists or Biologists as of right now. When the Natural Resource Specialist and Range Specialist were hired, they are also qualified Biologist, which is how we are getting by right now. The Geothermal Specialist has also taken a job at the _____ state office, however, still resides here so we can still utilize him to train a new person. The Budget Analyst has departed us in January and our Program Assistant has also left the Burro corrals plus Karen Sanders has also left.

CONGLOMERATE MESA: Question was raised about possible bat studies, with cameras ... if this was BLM. Mojave Precious Metals commissioned BLM to gather information. Will this info be shareable with the public ... Tom had no idea if it would be.

NEW BUSINESS:

PENDING MEMBERSHIP: We received a letter to accept Hyman Jain as Kayla's alternate for the Friends of the Inyo. He was approved by the membership.

+ Sam Merk received a text message from Mark Algazie that he is resigning from the PLRT.

+ Steven Rainey was at China Lake Astrological Society, is a volunteering to go up to the booster TV site and a heart attack in December. He was able to get help and was medevacked down to the Cardiology Hospital in Lancaster, where they saved his life. He had open heart surgery and a double bypass.

+ George Croll will obtain a letter from Mallory Boyd signed by him.

+ Francis Kuttor is not here because she is having hip surgery on January 30, so getting around is a problem. We miss you Francis and your puppy, Pedro.

OLD BUSINESS:

WEBSITE: Charlie has been busy with the website, and the hosting site needs to be renewed for approximately \$108.00 February 22. Mary called Randy Banis regarding the hosting of domains, and he offered to host our website through his hosting site for FREE.

IWVGA: George Croll made a few comments on the IWVGA pipeline. Then Charlie asked about micro plastics and PFAS and possible contamination, and that the base has some studies on this. The largest single Department of Defense site that was tested for the large concentrations of plastics was China Lake. They have done studies and they do things on base, measuring this constantly and I was recently finding information out on line that the base has. So, does the water district test for PFAS and I know there are no studies that say that plastics cause a certain thing. George proceeded to make the following comments: The water that flows into our aquifers comes off the Sierra Nevada's and the water generally flows from the west to the east. Where our wells are we get fresh water and it would be very unlikely it would contaminate our wells. To make a comment in favor of the GA, if we were to pump so much water out from the area between the mountains and the base that we could reverse the flow and water from under the base could actually percolate back towards town. It would take a whole lot, like 20 times what we are pumping now for a very long time for that to occur, but it is one of the things we worry about. We have tested for and we are at zero for PFAS.

+ We struggle with the ways to bring this pipeline in; water in the pipeline sometimes it comes as surface water and can come from as far north as Lake Shasta, around through the Delta, down thru the valley and there are a lot of bad things that can get into the water through that transfer system, like with crop dusters flying over and other contaminants. If we bring that water into the Indian Wells Valley through some pipe, we have some choices: we can just put it into our system that we have here in Ridgecrest probably wouldn't be illegal in any sense of the word, but it will have things in it that we've never had before, like PFAS's could come in or TCHM's or other things, and those things concern us greatly and that's when we turn to the GA and ask how we can mitigate those things. One of the things that we really preferred is instead of just dumping into our system is to percolate back into the ground or to inject it into the underground aquifer, but then you run the risk of contaminating the aquifer water and we struggle with this. The water we have here is some of the finest water you can get and the balance is you don't want to drain the aquifer to the point where you're pulling bad water into it. Over in the Salinas Valley, they've pumped so much water that they are getting actual ocean water that came under the mountains and into the Salinas Valley ... that's how much the farmers have pumped in Salinas.

+ Will brought up that something that is being tested for around the country is testing the water for pharmaceutical drugs. They are being tested down in the LA area which is local contamination, especially if you recycle your water. George replied that they are also concerned, and one of the ways to supplement water is to take water off from the water treatment plant and reinject it, but we have the same kind of concerns, but there aren't really great options.

+ Sam reminded us that the Navy has the Restoration Advisory Board and they use to meet at the Water Department here in town about every 3 months, but when covid hit, those meetings stopped, so we need to get those meetings opened up to the public again. Charlie said he contacted the archeologist for the Navy to ask if they have any volunteer programs anymore and they don't. It's like they have shut access off. Sam: It is a law, they have to do it. Barbara Bane: In their defense, I used to work in that department, my office was next door to the hydrologist and since 2019 they have had constant turnaround. The hydrologist will be there 6 months and then they're gone. It is so bad that they have a retired, on a consulting basis, a former hydrologist that was there when I was there, and they are paying him a fortune, because they either can't keep people, they're not qualified, or putting warm bodies into the seat, which is sad. So the Navy is paying him top dollar and are they going to want to pay him to attend meetings ... probably not. George: As a former DOD employee, I ran the installation restoration program and I understand the amount of money and valent effort that the Federal government goes to to clean up these sites around the country, which is an insurmountable task, given how many bases there are and the things that happened in the past. So don't ever think that the Federal government doesn't at least commit the dollars, as I know our base budget was in the ballpark of \$15 to \$20 million dollars a year or more. That's for water injection wells, cleaning different types of underground remediation. The DOD is at the lead and it's a particularly huge problem. Barbara: China Lake has particularly done a remarkable job compared to some bases I have worked on, China Lake has done a remarkable job with their IRB program in the past.

TOPICS FOR FUTURE MEETINGS:

- + Go to the Public Communications Officer who is supposed to be the public affairs liason between the base and Ridgecrest ... John ??? who was here and is on this committee. Sam will get his actual name and division he works in.
- + DOD is going to begin moving on the Raven problem, and the reason for that is because Fort Irwin & China Lake have just so many takes they are allowed ... China Lake is 4 and Fort Irwin is a lot more because they do ground offs ... like 30 or 40. The Navy cannot do Raven control without the cooperation from the city as commercial dumpsters are the single biggest contributor to Raven populations. 29 Palms base has just signed a problematic agreement for Raven control measures.
- + Bring in someone from Edison asking about how they are planning to provide enough energy for the mandated electric vehicles.

NEXT PLR MEMBERSHIP MEETING

- + Next PLRT meeting will be 3/28/24.

Adjourned at: 7:52pm

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: Sam Merk, Mary Grimsley, Charley Hattendorf

TOPICS FOR FUTURE MEETINGS:

- + Base and the valley's water issues.
- + 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
- + Petty Cash policy:
 - Voucher to withdraw money
 - 2 signatures – Secretary & Treasurer
- + Documents should be double-sided – lead by example