

PUBLIC LANDS ROUNDTABLE MINUTES

Meeting Location: BLM Ridgecrest Office

Minutes of: March 28, 2024

Called to order at: 6:03pm by Chair Mark Dunn

Pledge of allegiance was led by Arzell Hale.

A MOTION was made by Charlie Hattendorf, 2nd by Sam Merk to approve the February 22, 2024 minutes. They were approved as corrected.

PLRT MEMBERS IN ATTENDANCE: Barbara Bain, Mark Dunn, Arzell Hale, Charlie Hattendorf, Will Liebscher, Mark Mason, Sam Merk, Liam Connelly, Hector Villalobos, Libby Vincent and Craig Beck BLM.

Guests: George Croll, Heather Dunn, and Karen Sanders

BLM UPDATES: by Craig Beck, Ridgecrest Supervisor for Outdoor Recreation & Wilderness Program
BROAD BAND: Internet line from Ridgecrest to Lake Isabella is being worked on, trying to get public input, with documents being ready by fall 2024.

IWV GROUNDWATER AUTHORITY: BLM approved geo-technical studies that needed to be done for the planned pipeline route. BLM is still working through the EA process for the actual pipeline itself, which will probably be out for public comment by summer/fallish of this year.

CONGLOMERATE MESA: BLM staff is continuing to work on the draft EIS, working on alternatives that will eventually go out to the public. Barbara Bain asked "How long is that going to take?" Craig replied "Probably till late summer or fall as well."

??OWP: Shale pits that they use for Owens Lake dust mitigation projects.

PLACER GOLD MINE OPERATION REQUEST: South of Atolia area, where there was a sample drilling project the last couple of years, are actually going to go into production, the Discovery Group who has been to one of our meetings and briefed us on the project.

DUMPING ON PUBLIC LANDS: **Sterling Lakes group is the** safety hazmat coordinator out of our district office. He oversees a bunch of projects throughout the state and has had contractors remove about 10,000 pounds of miscellaneous trash off public lands in our area. On top of that, Ridgecrest staff and the American Conservation Association members have removed 4,000 pounds. Sterling is also working up in the Keeler area are removing tailings from a mill site and restocking them into a contained location, close to 12,000 cubic yards. He is also working on putting a permanent cap on the **Escagot** mill site outside of Randsburg as well as working on the Red Mountain Wash that runs down towards Cuddeback Lake, the tailings that have run off into the wash that contain arsenic as well as other heavy metals to a contained storage area. Will asked if the wash came close to the Owl Garage, where he claims there is a buried train car that is leaking hydrocarbons. Will will be reaching out to Sterling and asking these questions. Will also asked if there is a high level of hydrocarbons if there was a way for the BLM to motivate the EPA to clean that up? It was outside Craig's expertise. George Croll then replied that he might be able to help answer that question, that there should be a county program, CUPA, that has underground storage tanks for burying contaminated soil, like underground gas station tanks, etc. It is in San Bernardino County, but they should also have a CUPA.

OTHER REPORTS: No off-road accidents to report.

LAW ENFORCEMENT: We had BLM one law enforcement officer down at the Arizona border and one down at the California border helping the Border Patrol. This is between President's Day & St. Patrick's Day; they made 59 contacts for OHV's on highways; 12 stops for people without a helmet; 9 stops for no green stickers; 1 for a passenger in a cargo area; 1 stop for 2 passengers on an ATV built for 1; 2 with blue flashing lights; 1 for a seat-belt violation; 2 for off designated routes; 1 with a suspended license, as you must have a legal license; 2 grazing trespasses; vending without a permit; 2 vandalism investigations; 2 burglary investigations; 5 trash dumping investigations; and 1 illegal trail construction.

George Croll asked if the BLM has any interaction with the mapping programs, like Onyx? It shows trails but does not show if they are legal or not, and because it is on this application, you may believe they are legal. Craig has not has any communication with any of the trail app people, but the President of Friends of Jawbone has moved from OwlsheadGPS to Tracksmat (Traxmap??). That is probably the best maps as he does get the information from the BLM, which would be the best APP to use for legal trails. However, Will

claimed that the OwlsheadGPS app is the best, most up to date. (This needs to be cleared up at the next PLRT meeting.)

Mark Mason mentioned the frustration that Quail Forever has with the contractor, as he had accidentally closed roads to guzzlers that we maintain that they weren't supposed to close, so there was a long discussion about which roads were open and which roads were closed. We wanted to know which roads we could be on, so Tom was going to get us the BLM maps that showed currently allowed roads, and the keeper told him that "that is not publically releasable data".

Charlie stated you can't miss going to OwlsheadGPS for trail information, with printable maps, maps on line, free databases that give route numbers. There are a lot of rules and restrictions that are not always clear, like over in the Panamints it gets a little sketchy, like side X sides are not allowed into Death Valley National Park by court order. Some people have gotten into trouble by following the road on GPS that may not really be there, or found themselves crossing over Echo Range because the road is shown on their GPS.

STAFFING: _____ asked if Marty's position had been filled. Several BLM positions have not been filled and so far Marty's position has not been advertised. Craig said they down about a 1/3 of their staff. We can hire anytime, not waiting until the budget is approved in July.

DEATH VALLEY NATIONAL PARK: Mark "reached out to the Park Supervisor and inquired about a DVNP representative here, writing a physical letter and sent it and an email, and he did get an email back about Wildrose has been repaired up to the first campground, but from there on is still a no go. I physically went, because I had to go to Bishop, over to 136, from Olancho over, and it was evening time and somewhere around the barricade and looked, and they have chunks of asphalt cut out as long as this table and four times as wide. I mean it's like a jigsaw puzzle, this way and around it and you go this way and around it. That's from Olancho over to 190; it's a god awful mess." Arzell asked ... "The road to Wildrose is open?" and Mark replied "to the first campground ... right past the junction. All that past the work camp all the way up is still a no go." Arzell asked "You still can't get to the Charcoal Kilns?" Mark: "NO! You go to the first campground, past the junction, and that's it." (Mary: I wrote this section word for word so as to make sense of it.)

SAND CANYON: There was a brief discussion about some vandalism up Sand Canyon. It was done before Hillary and had been repaired. The barrier and signs had burned, but were repaired. The road that was damaged by Hillary has also been repaired. It's rough, but doable.

WATER RELEASE BY DWP: Charlie had a question, which is on the agenda. We've had a 20-year snow mass, so I'm anticipating that we're going to be having a lot more water that is going to be let loose by DWP out of the aqueduct. We now realize that DWP doesn't give any notice as to when or where a water release may occur, so has there been any adverse reports happened this last year. Craig said not that he knows of, not from this last one, but from the release a couple of years ago, one Tortoise was impacted.

_____ said that DWP had a biologist go down on horses and do a survey.

George Croll reported that the IWV Water District has been talking about the beneficial uses of DWP overflows and there was some work done and they thought that you couldn't percolate into the basin. We did some high tech _____, a helicopter flew over and did the data _____. They are making places where LA DWP dumps water where we could fashion, with a bull dozer and dig it out and create a large basin where we could percolate the water into the aquifer, which is good; it's more water for us. It could also help mitigate any damage to endangered species or other impacts. The conversation continued which you can listen to on the audio starting at approximately 31:30.

GRAZING: Karen asked about grazing, and there are 3 operators out with sheep. Craig asked when the permits for like, the El Paso's expire? Both Craig & Hector were guessing around May. What is the set time frame for a grazing lease? 5 years, 10 years? Craig could not answer and it on to asking Tom or Priscilla. A discussion about Conservation leases replacing Grazing leases.

ELECTRONIC PAYMENT: The National Park Service and Forest Service are moving to electronic payment for facilities on line. Is the BLM considering this was a question? Craig has not heard of any move to electronic payments and not accepting cash. DVNP has had several suits filed against them for this practice.

NEW BUSINESS:

DESERT TORTOISE NATURAL AREA: Liam reported that the Naturalists Season for the Desert Tortoise Preserved opened 2 weeks ago. The Naturalists are currently there, Hannah & Micaela are running the trailers in the area, so feel free to stop by. Liam also reported that he has had trouble this year getting water for the Naturalists, which wasn't a problem last year as California City allowed them to use the spigot there last year. He asked for any ideas to get water to them. Will has made and will make other inquiries around the area as to where they could acquire water in the area.

Liam also announced that April 6 is our work party, and it's also the 50th anniversary of the Desert Tortoise Preserve Committee itself. Last year was the 50th anniversary for the DTNA, the land that they are on. On April 6, the work parties I have in mind will be setting up signs, picking up trash, and a few other projects in

mind. More discussion continued. Will brought up the burnt out Cadillac. Liam didn't know if he would have time to go out there ... it is just an abandoned car that needs to be towed across the wash. More discussion. George volunteered to come down and look at it.

OLD BUSINESS:

WEBSITE: Charlie reported that everyone should have emails, at least the primary members of the PLRT, there are 19 of us, which does not include the alternates, just the primary members. The storage capacity does not allow any of the alternates to have their email there. There has not been a whole of activity, as far as mail. Charlie is working on a design that will make it look a little more modern and draw people into it.

TOPICS FOR FUTURE MEETINGS:

- + Keep working on DVNP to attend our meetings. _____ suggested to contact Abby _____, she is their contact person, who has seemed interested.
- + George brought up the court cases going on with the Ground Water Authority against Mojave Pistachios and other farmers; it appears that pretty much all the farming area in the valley is going to go fallow? What happens after that we have been trying to understand, when all those trees die as they have no water and their just sitting there? If Mojave Pistachios does not get their appeal heard by the California Supreme Court, the GA is going to file to shut down their wells, those trees are going to die, and I don't know what the restoration, reclamation, the reuse, or the practical reuse of that land is or whether the BLM plays a part in that, but it appears that there's going to be a lot of farmland out there and all of these dead trees just standing there ... what happens then? Craig responded that the BLM does not have a leg in that fight because it's private property. At one time an alternative was proposed that this private property be used as solar fields, and the Navy came back with absolutely not. The glare from the panels would be deadly to the pilots. Also, will these old wells that they are no longer using have to be capped off? There have already been problems out along the Navy fence with pot farmers & their hoop houses stealing water from the alfalfa fields.
- + Sam would like to see a presentation from the BLM on the Radmacher's, because a lot of us are not really sure what parts are closed and which parts are open, which parts are amended. Also include Shooters Canyon. Also, please include events happen, like bicycle events, walks, etc. Not motorized.
- + Mark Mason volunteered to give a 20 minute presentation on guzzler activity. Right now, we have done no work on the guzzlers because BLM has decided that we need to have an archeology survey if we're going to disturb the ground, drive a T post, and because we are at a very low priority list we have been told to stop all work on the guzzlers. That does not affect us hauling water, just doing any work on the guzzlers.

NEXT PLR MEMBERSHIP MEETING

- + Next PLRT meeting will be 4/25/24.

Adjourned at: 7:16pm

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

No executive committee meeting.