

PUBLIC LANDS ROUNDTABLE MINUTES

Meeting Location: BLM Ridgecrest Office

Minutes of: May 23, 2024

Called to order at: 6:01pm by Chairman Mark Dunn

Pledge of allegiance was led by Mark Dunn.

A MOTION was made by Arzell Hale, 2nd by John Auburn to approve the April 26, 2024 minutes. They were approved as corrected, with the need to have Mark fill in some words.

PLRT MEMBERS IN ATTENDANCE: John Auburn, Arzell Hale, Mary Grimsley, Charlie Hattendorf, Beverly Hill, Will Liebscher, Hector Villalobos, Libby Vincent, Jaime Lopez Wolters, and Tom Bickauskas.

Guests: George & Susan Croll, Tim Mahoney, Heather Dunn, and 2 Kern County Sheriffs: Hollingsworth & Baker.

BLM UPDATES: by Tom Bickauskas, Field Manager, R/C BLM

BURROS: Tom did an interview with ABC23 News out of Bakersfield regarding an update on the 2019 Burro shootings north of Mojave National Preserve between Baker & Primm. The reward has been upped to \$36K for any info on who shot the Burros. The BLM does have some leads and also photos of the suspected vehicles.

- + The BLM is out trapping nuisance Burros out in the El Centro and Palo Verde areas.

- + We just got approved to do an emergency removal of Burros near the Piute Mountains, off I-40 on the south side. So we're out of our area helping other areas collect Burros. They are running out of water in the Piute's, where they put out 1,000 gallons of water in two different locations. It's going to be a dry summer.

- + Fire season is upon us already, and we have had already had 3 call-outs in the Jawbone area: 1 bottle rocket, 1 target shooting, and another unknown cause. We also had a 141-acre fire just east of Red Mountain about 2½ weeks ago started by a bottle rocket. No Tortoises were hurt, just grass burned and we caught it before it got into the wilderness. It took about 4 hours to get it out.

- + The report that there were Burros shot up in Kennedy Meadows seems to be a bogus story.

- + Mary asked about the Forest Service considering Burros a nuisance and will shoot them on site? Tom responded that the Forest Service is not exempt from the 1971 Wild Horse & Free Roaming Burro Act, however, the Park Service is exempt and can shoot on sight. However, this say & age, no one wants to be out there euthanizing Burros ... no one wants that kind of publicity. The BLM has had a hard time of shaking the image of sending the captured horses to slaughter, which is just not true.

- + John Auburn added that ABC23 News B/F had also been out to see their Burros and to conduct an interview about their Run With the Burros and were very positive. The reporter was new to the public lands arena and was like a sponge soaking up whatever information he could.

MINING: We continue to monitor the exploratory drilling by Atolia by the Gold Discovery Group. There are now about 55 holes of the 193 that they are permitted. We use an app to follow where drilling has been done.

- + Regarding Conglomerate Mesa exploratory drilling ... they have requested to put the roads back in. BLM had a Tribal meeting today and the BLM is preparing the EIS and we are still a couple of months away from having that publically available ... so not before July. They have been asked where they are getting their water, which they have not disclosed, and will wait to the last minute to let us know. It is a 3rd party contractor that is doing the EIS.

- + The Lithium mining over in Panamint Valley is done, the holes/area has been cleaned up and they have gone home. They have finished drilling the 4 holes they were permitted for.

- + Charlie asked about the new BLM Lands Rule that is coming ... the BLM is waiting for the policy to come down from National to State, then down to the Districts. What we think it will be is one holder can apply for a Conservation Lease like you would for a Right-of-way. You may have heard about our Durability Agreement out at Jawbone/Butterbredt ... the ACEC where the Rudnick Common Allotment was retired about 3 years ago ... the solar company wanted to use that as their mitigation. One of the things it would do, it would give one lease holder some kind of a guarantee that work to restore would not be undone by another consumptive use. This is kind of what I see this Land Rule would be. Charlie spent some time reading the Rule in the Federal Register, and the term of the lease would be 10 years ... it's called The Conservation and Landscape Health Rule

POWER LINES: We just came off of a field trip this week for a proposed SCE power line from Cal City out to 395, as SCE is looking to bring more power to Cal City. That will most likely require an EIS.

+ Two of the remediation projects ... the Ivanpah Control that starts up at Bishop control, follows 395 south, takes an east turn along 58 to Barstow and out to Ivanpah ... this project is inching along with the draft EIS coming out early fall. The other powerline project called Silver Peak that goes from Bishop control to Dyer, Nevada toward Fish Lake Valley ... does not serve a lot of people but was put in over 100 years ago and SCE has been replacing a pole here, a pole there as needed, but the line does not meet the new rating requirements and the lines are not high enough off the ground. These projects are so that they meet the new transmission standards so that they don't arc and for grid reliability. The Inyo Nat'l Forest, Bishop and Ridgecrest BLM offices, are interested in seeing if there is alternate routing of this line as not many people are served by that line between Bishop & Dyer. So they are asking the question, does it need to be here? Mary asked if power could come from somewhere in Nevada and Tom responded that it is actually power that goes to Nevada. The line goes to a substation in Nevada from Bishop.

WEMO: No change there. We're working our way through the litigation on that.

DUMPING ON PUBLIC LANDS: Our Rangers were out a couple of weeks ago out around the Piper Mtn. Wilderness, the Fish Lake Valley area, Panamint Valley, Atolia, keep a close watch on the wild horse & burro corrals, the DTRNA, Middle Knob ACEC, Robber's Roost ACEC, Kelly Mine Road, Jawbone Canyon, Dove Springs area, Jawbone/Butterbrecht ACEC, and Red Mountain area. We have 8 officers, which includes our Chief, so we're able to cover a lot of territory.

+ We have an officer that supports the statewide effort to eradicate marijuana grows and every year the state puts together a team of BLM Rangers that go out into the wilderness and they use helicopters to get them into the bottom of remote canyons and they physically try to capture the bad guys and take out the infrastructure in the places that are really hard to get to.

+ A discussion ensued about thieves illegally obtaining water.

+ A Ranger investigated an illegal dump, which turned out to be on the Navy base.

+ A Ranger investigated possible sheep trespass at the DTRNA, but was determined to be on private land.

+ Rangers investigating gate damage and fence cut at the DTRNA and they made the necessary repairs.

+ Tom ?? mentioned that he really enjoyed the trip out to the DTRNA to remove the burned out Cadillac with George Croll and the Gear Grinders.

+ Our Rangers have assisted with several fire investigations, including the 141 acre fire over east of Red Mountain.

+ Our Rangers are always on patrol and help to monitor our special recreation permitted events, like motorcycle races, like the Viewfinders Grand Prix event that is usually held out at the Fairgrounds and around, which was held this last weekend on public lands.

+ A Ranger investigated the construction of permanent target stands & shooting platform in the Horse Thief Canyon road in the Stallion Springs area.

ROAD CONDITIONS: We've had our OHV road maintenance crew out fixing some of the main roads out in the El Paso's, like EP-15 with their Sweco dozer with the 5' blade and 4' track ... they're fixing the washouts and leaving it as rough as possible, mindful of the recreational experience. Mary asked if they had gotten out to Stone Canyon to repair the 3-4 foot deep cut? Mary will send GPS coordinates to Tom & Craig so that it might be repaired before PVD in November.

+ Mary asked Tom if he had received the letter from the Gear Grinders sent to both Ridgecrest & Bishop offices regarding the need to renew the Adopt-A-Trail agreement for the Inyo Crest Trail, which is divided between the two offices. Tom had received it but has not done anything with it yet.

+ We had a discussion about Saline Valley Salt Tram tower that got pulled over. The guys were illegally off the road on the dry lake, which wasn't dry and they got stuck in the mud, hooked onto the tower & pulled it over. The Park Service had already allocated funds to stabilize it, so now they have a lot more work to do. They caught the guys who hopefully will be severely dealt with.

+ The Pumice road has been graded and reopened, so you can now get to the turn off to go to Ayers Rock. No work has been done from the turn-off up to the parking area for Ayers Rock. You can get to it in a Jeep, but it still has some cuts across it.

STAFFING: We're down 2 people at the corrals, 2 geologists, but we have made an offer for a biologist and the person has accepted. We're down 2 people in administration, still need 1 realty specialists but we are prioritizing that lower than the other positions right now. Congress cut the budget of the Department of the Interior; the budget was passed back in March and we are yet to see any of the money trickle down to us yet. Our staffing is down about 60% right now. Barstow has done quite a bit of hiring lately. George Croll made a political comment, that he thinks it wrong that our country prioritizes billions of dollars overseas for wars and not funding your agency (lots of agreement could be heard). Will asked if "they had officially turned this [the Ridgecrest officer] over to you?" Tom replied, "No, the district has decided to go a different way with the leadership of this office. I'll step down when a new field manager arrives. [Outcry from members!] Yes, a new

field manager has been selected, unfortunately it's not me, I don't know who this person is, or when they're coming. I'm not going to Sacramento; I'll be the number two. This is a relatively new development.

GUEST SPEAKER: Mark called Barbara Baine asking about Julie Hendrix, the Base biologist who again was on the agenda for tonight to speak to us about the Big Horn Sheep on base. We don't know what happened, but Barbara was walking her dog in the dog park and a big dog "got" her knee.

NEW BUSINESS:

NEW MEMBERSHIP APPLICATIONS: None received.

WEBSITE: Charlie would like to put on the website information from the Federal Register what we just discussed ... The Conservation and Landscape Health Rule ... of which Tom is hoping the info will come down in 2 to 3 weeks. Tom also said that if it comes down as a publically available instructional memorandum, anyone will be able to go onto the BLM website and find it and read it for yourself. If it comes as an Internal Instructional Memorandum, then you won't. Charlie continued that the BLM has been directed in this document to 'maintain an inventory of landscape intactness'. Tom explained that he thought there would probably be a new database stood up, managed by our headquarters office, and it would probably contain tracks of lands over a certain size without major roads going through them, with the idea connectivity is a big thing, at least here in the desert, for species migration needed to maintain genetic _____.

+ Also, Charlie would like to include an area where members who have given their time and are no longer with us are recognized, like Don Joe McKernan, Marie Brashear, Ed Waldheim, Jim Kenney, & Bill Maddux. He doesn't have that kind of information and would need help with that.

+ Charlie would like to spruce it up; his own opinion is that it looks kind of old-fashioned. He would also like to include info on the groups that belong to this organization.

+ Charlie asked what is the designation of the land at the Pinnacles? Is it an ACEC or an OHV area? Tom believes it could be an ACEC in our land use plan; it has designated routes which means it is a Limited Use Area. Random discussion continued.

+ Charlie is open for any suggestions.

OLD BUSINESS:

+ Mark brought up the Osborne Cabin, that we can't get funding to work on the cabin because it's 30 feet outside of the cherry stem road, so that puts it in wilderness. Tom said he needs to get a buy-out by archeology that the roof needs to be repaired and then the work could possibly be done. Rain is really dumping through the roof and it is incurring more damage. Right now our main archeologist, Amy, is on detail to the State Office and won't be back until sometime this summer. If we were to screw down corrugated tin to add a protective barrier, it could be removed if not appropriate. Mark said he has corrugated tin that could be used for the project. There does not seem to be any available information on the Osborne Cabin and when it was build, or who built it.

+ Suggestions for topics for our next meeting: contact Julie Hendrix again about Big Horn Sheep; George Croll requested 10 minutes, as the Water District has a professional company come in and they are doing a professional cost estimate for the water pipeline; Mark has a friend who actually drilled the wells on the base, did the test pumping, etc., and he would be glad to give us all the numbers, so we would have to set up a day at the Senior Center in Trona, have a picnic and he will give us all the info, because he knows how many gallons per minute, etc.

+ Charlie brought up that the IWV Ground Water Authority won the court case with Mojave Pistachios and cannot continue. There was a discussion about water rights and individual well water rights, etc.

+ Jerry Johnson, shattered his leg and is living at the Trona Food Band, and will no longer be a member. So we need a representative for Small Mining. Mary Grimsley made a **MOTION** to find a new representative for Small Mining, 2nd by Charlie Hattendorf. Passed.

+ Mark announced that his wife has been doing really badly and her doctors believe she may have Lupus. They will find out in a couple of weeks. Mark may need to resign as Chairman and just represent wilderness, and hand the reins over to Charlie, our Co-Chairman [laughter from Charlie].

Adjourned at: 7:29pm

NEXT PLR MEMBERSHIP MEETING will be 6/27/24.

Respectfully submitted, Mary Grimsley

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