

PUBLIC LANDS ROUNDTABLE MINUTES

Meeting Location: BLM Ridgecrest Office

Minutes of: September 26, 2024

Called to order at: 6:00pm by Co-Chairman Charlie Hattendorf

Pledge of allegiance was led by Sam Merk.

PLRT MEMBERS IN ATTENDANCE: John Auburn, Roy Bohnert, Kayla Browne, Mary Grimsley, Arzell Hale, Charlie Hattendorf, Bev Hill, Raymond Kelso, Will Liebscher, Jaime Lopez Walters, Sam Merk, Steven Rainey, Karen Sanders, & Hector Villalobos. Our new Field Manager, Phil Desenze introduced himself; he has spent time on the Inyo National Forest, Sequoia NF, as well as Angeles NF. While with Bishop, he was also stationed at the White Mountain Research Station Ranger for several years. He mentioned that this roundtable was mentioned as being the model as how to engage different organizations and citizens with different viewpoints on how to manage public lands and how to use it effectively. Also, Tom Bickauskas, Deputy Field Manager.

Guests: Ethan Plugge, Kern County Sheriff, Greg Kunde, and Diane _____ (here with Raymond).

A MOTION was made by Sam Merk, 2nd by John Auburn, to approve the August 22, 2024 minutes. They were approved as sent.

BLM UPDATES: by Phil Desenze, Ridgecrest Field Manager

LAW ENFORCEMENT: Is out there making contacts with the public. We are first, out there to educate, as well as the physical engineering (signs, etc.) and the social engineering, as well as enforcement. We had some pig wrangling lately, as well as contacts out in the Wagon Wheel are, touching bases with folks. We've found some incursions into the Owen's Peak Wilderness area, and damage in that area as well.

BLM INTERNS: We have some interns coming out on the ground next week as part of the OHV Grant Program, as restoration interns as well as bio-tech, and plant monitoring, restoration effectiveness monitoring interns already here working.

OHV GRANTS: Tom reported that they applied in all 5 grant categories, law enforcement, grading, restoration, planning, development to the tune of \$1.9 million dollars.

WEMO: Is still at the lawyers. Nothing new to report.

RANDBURG OLD WEST DAYS: Will complimented Melissa and Brandon who were there, and he talked with them a long time, and they had a lot of contacts and handed out all their information and needed more.

OHV & FRIENDS OF JAWBONE: Phil attended their meeting with Craig Beck, and seeing that partnership in action is quite remarkable. We couldn't do what we're doing out there on the landscape without the partnership on the OHV side, as well as other work they're doing, i.e., restoration and a whole other host of things. Starting this weekend, and just about every weekend thereafter, we have some kind OHV permitted event taking place somewhere. Don't hold my time with the Forest Service against me, but I pretty much broke the mold when it comes to how I look at OHV, and I have to with the BLM, as I don't have a choice, and I look at all the uses as reasonable, as long as they're within their own policies, and OHV is up there near the top, and particularly on BLM land. I have always been encouraged by the OHV user groups as really great partners and stewards of the land, and want to be there in the future as well and we're working together and hand in hand, and to make that happen, then that's when we have problems.

RANGE MANAGEMENT: My old stomping grounds were Deep Springs and up north, and range programs keep trucking along. Phil was on a call today with China Lake talking about our endangered species monitoring and a little more work we need to do in concert with them.

BURROS: He also went out to the Wild horse & burro corrals to see what was going on there, and we have a big task there to get them some more help. There's 2½ folks working there and 2,000 head, so if you know anyone interested in adopting, adoptions are open, not only on the couple of weekends, but any time. The conversation regarding the wild horses & burros continued for quite some time. Working with Public Affairs in Palm Springs and also with the new Public Affairs officer at China Lake There is an untapped resource in using social media to get some of these pictures and the word out that the public can help us with the challenge of wild horse & burro adoptions.

TAMARISK REMOVAL: A joint project with the Sierra Club is being done in Saline Valley as an annual trip, although it was skipped last year. There is also a Russian Thistle removal project over by Dyer, Nevada.

PETROGLYPH FESTIVAL: Hoping to be out there for this short event to talk with people, and also possibly out at the Mojave Air & Space Port.

STAFFING: We have plenty of positions here in this office that needs to be filled. The next positions we will probably advertise for are for a Biologist and for the Wild Horse & Burro, two positions at the facility. We also have land & real estate. We do have a new Geologist starting; we have a vacant wilderness position, petroleum engineer, budget analyst, administration, a pipeline of interns. A conversation ensued on obtaining and using volunteers, from schools to the public.

PROJECTS: Been busy re-permitting the Sage Pistol Range and getting closer to finalization out by Wiknich's Rifle Range, and also been out to Shooter's Canyon (China Lake Blvd. & 395). There is also a shooting range out in Trona, where Mark & his girls shoot, but I haven't been out there yet. Also, the Chukar population is huge this year, so there is going to be a lot of shooting. A lot of time was spent talking about shooting, hunting, etc.

TRANSMISSION LINES: We're in the middle of rehabilitating transmission lines. Ivanpah is on the back burner right now, possibly starting in December.

PIPELINE RIGHTS-OF-WAYS: Working with GWA, EA may be published in 2025. Lots of interest by the public. Our role is to evaluate an applicant of a proposal for a right of way, not the advocacy of the source of the water ... I'm not a decision maker.

MINING: Conglomerate Mesa project is for exploratory drilling and would impact 12 acres proposed, and we're working through the reports, including an archeological evaluation, and we'll have a draft environmental document scheduled to be out in March of 2025. The EA had 23,000 comments and the ES had hundreds of comments, so there's a lot of public interest there. I also plan to meet with our Tribal partners in November to discuss this project specifically and I need to get out there and see the area specifically.

WILDFIRES: Lake Isabella – Tom spoke on this, as he worked a lot of it over the summer. The Borel Fire never burned onto Ridgecrest BLM; it came within 3 miles up in the Manter Meadow area. We then had a fire up near the LADWP pipeline in Walker Pass, the Bella Fire, burned a couple of days. Had a very lively fire fight, trying to keep it from crossing the road (178). Then we had the El Paso Fire that started on the 4th of July that we think was human caused, but we could not definitely determine how it started. It's undetermined at this point. We also had the Red fire, that burned out by Will's house, which was human caused and we're working on that. We will be looking at some fuel reduction projects in the future.

BURRO CANYON: Sam & Raymond Kelso attended a meeting last week regarding Burro Canyon, a site on the base, and Sam talked to Charisse, who is the Environmental Officer, but everything she does has to go through the Public Affairs Office, and she wanted to come to the meeting tonight, but at the last moment she wasn't able to. Sam picked up several things at the meeting and sent them to Charlie and he put them on our website, and we need to get our comments in before October 10th. If you go to the website, you will see a letter tells you where to send your comments. Burro Canyon is in Inyo County and the thing is, is that they had the officers from the Inyo County Air Quality there. The base has been trying to clean up their explosive ordinances. Charlie made note that there was not much information in the letter that went out as to how much land was to be added, basically just said we want to do this. It's been ear marked for weapons testing. There are lands on the base that are owned by the base, and lands on the base that are owned by BLM, and since they are enlarging a particular area, there should be an amendment process to the club, but they're not doing that. Interestingly enough, there is a water well near that they have decided isn't part of our water. Charlie is very interested in the water table and the testing that has been done. Charlie also brought to our attention that this base tested the highest of any DOD facility in PFAS.

CONGLOMERATE MESA (AGAIN !!!): Kayla Brown brought up that there is a Draft EIS that has been debriefed at The California District Office already and is on its way to the State office waiting to talk to Joe at the state office ... just the alternatives. Phil answered "it's in process for sure" and the meeting is set for October 11th with the new State Director.

PUBLIC LANDS RULE? Health of the Land.

There was a lengthy discussion regarding a variety of subjects that went on forever. I did not transcribe it all. I have been listening for and typing for 5 plus hours, off & on. If you want to listen to this discussion, it starts around 1 hour, 30 minutes.

Sam requested that maybe at our next meeting that Craig Beck give us a presentation on the new roads that are going to be, as he is very familiar with it.

NEW BUSINESS:

No new membership requests or assisting members.

WEBSITE UPDATE: Charlie talked to Randy Banis regarding our website, he increased our storage space.

FIELD TRIP: Everyone is interested in a possible trip to Conglomerate Mesa sometime in the near future. The executive committee will come up with 3 dates.

Adjourned at: 7:50pm

NEXT PLR MEMBERSHIP MEETING will be 10/24/24.

Respectfully submitted, Mary Grimsley

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