

PUBLIC LANDS ROUNDTABLE MINUTES

Meeting Location: BLM Office Minutes of: January 22, 2026

Called to order at: 6:00pm by Chairman George Croll

Pledge of allegiance was led by George Croll.

There were no minutes from the December meeting, as the audio was very hard to understand; too much talking over others; voices were unrecognizable; and if the agenda was followed, I didn't know where we were.

Charlie made a motion to have the audio file as the official minutes, Barbara Bane (??) 2nd it. Discussion ensued, both for & against. It was suggested that we ask Phil about posting. Charlie suggested we table this motion until after talking to Phil.

PLRT MEMBERS IN ATTENDANCE: John Auburn, Barbara Bane, George Croll, Skip Gorman, Arzell Hale, Charlie Hattendorf, Will Liebscher, ~~Gary Luckerth~~, Mary Grimsley, Mark Mason, Sam Merk, ~~Steven Rainey~~, Karen Sanders, Libby Vincent, Hector Villalobos, Jaime Lopez Walters, & ~~Phil Desenze, Ridgecrest Field Manager~~, Tom Bickauskas, Assistant R/C Field Manager.

GUESTS: Colleen Brock, Lisa Lavelle, Audubon Society.

ANNOUNCEMENTS: George announced that Arzell Hale will be retiring. Arzell followed up with, "as of next Friday, I will be retired. I turned 89 last October, so I guess I'm old enough to retire. It's going to be different, I've worked all of my life; this is the 64th year that I've worked since graduating college, and I've never not had a job, so it's going to be different." Colleen Brock will be the representative for Arzell. Motion was made by _____, 2nd by Sam, votes approved Colleen. Arzell will continue to come to the meetings.

GUEST SPEAKER: Emily Ontiverds, gave us a presentation on "Revealing Payahuunadi" (23:30 minutes). This is a Water Education Program that is being developed in partnership with Friends of the Inyo and the Owens Valley _____ Indian? Water Commission. Emily's partner is Charlene, who could not attend tonight. Please go to the 23:30 to listen to Emily's presentation, **ends at 1:00:10 minutes**.

ROUND TABLE BUSINESS

+ **NEW MEMBER APPLICATIONS:** none

BLM UPDATES: Tom Bickauskas

+ Tom is wearing the new BLM uniform, a nice royal blue.

+ Tom announced that Phil Desenze will not be at the PLRT meetings from now through May, as he will busy on those Thursday nights, so Tom will be our building host.

+ **LAW ENFORCEMENT: STATS: THANKSGIVING:** Contacted 1,111 people; gave out 377 warnings; 95 citations; 63 public assists; 2 search & rescues; and 3 Law Enforcement assists, and no major incidents, which for a holiday weekend, is pretty good. **CHRISTMAS & NEW YEARS:** Contacted 500 people; 138 warnings; 20 citations; 1 search & rescue. Visitation was down, we think, due to rainy and muddy conditions. There were quite a few camping, but not riding. **MLK WEEKEND:** 191 contacts; 26 warnings; 5 citations; 6 assists; 1 medical, a person flown out; it was great weather but not much visitation, which we believe is because Garlock Road is closed. Other Law Enforcement duties have been, they are working several trash dumping situations, with lots of reporting. If you run across someone dumping, get photos of vehicle, license plate, people, materials being dumped, & descriptions, etc., without getting personally involved. If the dumping is in progress, you can call our 24 hours/7 days a week Dispatch Center at 909-383-5652. You can ask to have an officer call you back. If not in progress, call the field office, 760-384-5400. Lots of interaction with mine claimants trying to get their claims, going off roads. The price of gold has made folks really interested in casual use on their claims. There's been a lot of interest in claimants wanting to file a plan of operations, and to use bigger & faster equipment. If you have a claim jumper, you would call Kern County Sheriffs.

+ **CONGLOMERATE MESA:** The EIS came out in December, but the Decision didn't come with it. So, the Decision is still pending, and it will be made at the District State Director. Sam asked are they going to address the water that they are thinking about taking from one spring that feeds down into Panamint? Tom: the EIS does discuss water usage and water location. BLM is what permits that, or that particular aspect of it ... Inyo

County.. Phil will be involved in some way in that decision. The Decision has actually been pulled up to the District. Drawdown of the water will actually affect Panamint Springs. The BLM's preferred alternative in this final EIS to building roads is the use of helicopters to move things around and to build timber pads to level the spot, so that less ground needs to be disturbed & reclaimed. The drilling methods are basically with _____ power compressors, so the need for water went way down. So this should minimize your water concerns. This conversation continued with Sam bringing up the minimum amount of water could make a big difference in Panamint Springs being able to continue operating. Jaime Lopez said that the proposal says that the water would come from a commercial source, so would not be from Darwin. Barbara asked how would the water get there? It would be flown in by helicopter.

+ **NEPA** planning website has changed. It is now mobile friendly. George asked if there were any proposed changes to the NEPA process? Tom replied that things changed last summer. It is this Administrations attempt to streamline the process. The Dept. of the Interior ... that we don't necessarily have to have a scoping or a comment period before an EA. The local desire is to still have those just because we would probably get less appeals that way as we are integrated with the community and we don't want to go sideways. We do realize we need to cut processing time somewhere. The other thing is, we have 95 categorical exclusions to pull from, but the biggest issue is what is more comfortable for you?

+ Barbara or Libby asked if sheep are going to be turned out for grazing this spring? Tom: We haven't received any applications as of yet, but they should be coming in this next month.

+ Mary asked if there are any new solar projects in horizon? She is tired of going down Hwy 14 and seeing solar fields as far as the eye can see, on the east side of 14. Tom: the Administration has put a moratorium on us without eye level approval. We had a memo that has 59 things to work on. The California Desert District will be moving ahead on 1 or 2 solar projects that are at the 90% level, so they are not in our area. Karen added that the solar was approved by Kern County, and most are on private property. Solar projects will not be approved under restricted air space.

+ Sam, going back to sheep grazing, suggested that we have a BLM person give this group a presentation on grazing, and how they determine whether or not to approve permits. We had a wonderful presentation years ago, but we have lots of new members that would benefit from a presentation. Tom will mention it to Phil.

+ Tom passed out a flier inviting us to the OHV Open House on February 11, 4:00 for Stakeholders, 5:00 for the public regarding OHV Grants.

NEW BUSINESS:

+

OLD BUSINESS:

+ George passe around our "Priority List" projects asking us to review it and bring back suggestions, Top 10.

+ The DAC's charter was not funded by this Administration. It's a done deal.

+ The Fong letter went out, and Hector verbalized that the Kerncrest Audubon suggested that it go out to our Senators also.

+ Barb or Libby, brought up how important it is to attend the OHV grant meeting on the 11th, if you want to advocate for something on our project list.

+ There cannot be any road maintenance inside the WEMO lawsuit area until it is resolved.

Meeting was adjourned at: 8:05pm

NEXT PLR MEMBERSHIP MEETING will be 1/26/2026 at

Respectfully submitted, Mary Grimsley

EXECUTIVE COMMITTEE:

George Croll, Chairman, can be reached by phone @:

Steven Rainey, Co-Chair, can be reached by:

Mary Grimsley, Secretary, can be reached by email at: maranjer@gmail.com

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

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