

PUBLIC LANDS ROUNDTABLE MINUTES

Meeting Location: BLM Office Minutes of: September 24, 2026
Called to order at: 6:04pm by Co-chair Charlie Hattendorf

PLRT MEMBERS IN ATTENDANCE: Libby Vincent, Charlie Hattendorf, Will Liebscher, Gary Luckeroth, Mary Grimsley, Sam Merk, Deneal Schiller, Roy Bohnert, Greg Kunde, Barbara Bain, Karen Sanders, Phil DeSenze, BLM Assistant Manager

Pledge of allegiance was led by Charlie Hattendorf.

Charlie opened up the meeting to inform Phil (as he'd not been present at the last meeting), that the audio recorded is not automatically being made available to the public, and is used to generate minutes only.

We reviewed the historical structure of the PLRT being a vehicle to represent interests that did not have a well-funded and policy making capability, and whose members felt under-represented in the government's Desert protection policies: such as the offroad community, equestrian, mining, access etc. As such, the Executive committee had met to consider another Chairperson, as George had abruptly left, and Gary Luckeroth volunteered and has been accepted to lead us. Current executive members are Mary Grimsley as secretary, Charlie Hattendorf as vice chair, Sam Merk representing public members, and Steve Rainey for CLAS. Gary was introduced. Barbara questioned who was on the committee, and mentioned we should have an election so, this will be put on the next agenda for us to vote on.

We went around the room for introductions. Floor was opened for comments. Will wanted to get road access information easily distributed, in this case for hunters.

Public Lands Day will be September 26th at 9:00am. Deneal gave an update to the planned effort, locally led by Sam and Deneal with the BLM giving oversight. Cleanup sites were discussed and Phil outlined how if identifying information on the sources for the trash was found – such as mail – that law enforcement could investigate and contact individuals. Deneal also spoke about lifting safety. Phil mentioned this is the only cleanup event for this office that is planned on this date. Staffing limits and weather constraints affect the cleanup efforts done by the office.

Sam mentioned the BLM started July of 1946, and it coincides with her 80th birthday which everyone enjoyed hearing of, and her spending her birthday working on cleaning up the land. FLPMA was also passed October 21st.

BLM UPDATES (Phil) – Work on the supplemental EIS is in planning for the WEMO effort. A contractor will be used for the effort. Current NEPA rules will probably dictate an accelerated public comment period. The common criteria clause is being reviewed.

OFFICE STAFFING has not been reduced, which is a good thing. There are 3 vacancies in law enforcement. Sadie Brown will be the supervisor once the current supervisor (Jason) retires in March. Law enforcement is under funded and yet critical. Funding this requirement affects other positions, such as the office has not had a geologist in 2.5 years on staff. A temporary archeologist (Brook) has been hired through OHV funding. Two full time archeologists, park ranger, and a biologist are needed by the office. The Realty and geologist positions have been approved so hiring hopefully can progress soon. Within the desert district, the Ridgecrest office has the most positions being considered, so this is perhaps a positive outcome from the congressional letter the PLRT submitted. On the other hand, there are consolidation of efforts, such as fire district supervision and control which has been centralized elsewhere. This consolidation effort will probably be extended toward other operations.

LAW ENFORCEMENT With the current closure, route monitoring is being performed and law enforcement is leading in informing public education regarding route closures. Citations for repeat offenders regarding incursions are to be applied. Maps are now with geolocatable information and QR codes are online at the BLM site.

WILD HORSE & BURRO: A facility manager position is currently being pursued at the Wild Horse and Burro facility, with the likely candidate being someone we all know. We will be filling the 2 wrangler positions very soon. We are at capacity, 70% horses – 30% burros, so approximately 1,000 animals. We have completed 3 gathers, mostly from the Needles district. No gathers from DVNM. We gathered 13 from the Trona area.

WEMO: We haven't heard anything new from the courts. We had to submit our first bi-annual report in June. Our next will be in January. We haven't heard anything about the closure, which is still in place, but we have to complete the EIS and biological opinion. We have funding from the department to complete that effort. They're getting pretty aggressive about us completing within the year or so with the Fish & Wildlife Service and the Biological division and the EIS. The closure is adversely affecting the residents of Randsburg, as well as the Garlock Road closure. The rumor is that a temporary road will be put in while the main Garlock Road is under construction putting in a bridge, but it takes money, time, effort and there are a lot of steps to complete to begin the construction of something more permanent. Garlock Road is a County maintained road.

FIRE: Consolidation of the Fire Organization puts our office in 3 different jurisdictions, although I found out it may be reduced to 2. Most of our area will be covered by the Eastern Sierra Unit which is Bishop. Western Kern, Walker Pass will be out of Bakersfield Field Office.

AUCTION: Hailey Geothermal Auction EA is on the website, which is not signed yet. It needs to be posted 45 days before the auction. The rest of the offices got to do an EA or a determination or the lowest level of NEPA, and we were looking to do that, but we're the lucky ones as we have done an EIS of this area back in 2020, it was tied up in court for several years, and the settlement that was reached in 2024 said that any lease, exploration, or development would need to go through an EA if not an EIS and the NEPA process. So we found out in June that we're going to have to do an EA. Fortunately we have the EIS with a lot of the data. The reclamation bond will be a bit higher here than up on Conglomerate Mesa.

I have no idea how we got onto this subject from the auction, but Sam asked where are "they" (I have no idea who she was talking about) getting their water from? "They" went from wanting to use 2 million gallons to 10,000 gallons. Sam asked over & over "Where are they going their water from?" Darwin has been out of water this summer. Mike Stone? Water must be bought from a state licensed source. No one at Darwin or Mike Stone are NOT licensed. It doesn't make sense to truck water to Lone Pine and helicopter it up to the site. This discussion went on and on.

GROUND WATER: There was a discussion about the water and the pipeline.

CURATION AGREEMENT: An agreement was signed by the BLM & Maturango Museum on the curation of artifacts, specifically an ore car from somewhere around Cerro Gordo, that came back to the BLM and will now be transferred to the Museum to their curation facility. They will eventually be put out on Museum grounds with interpretation.

INDIAN WELLS CANYON ROAD: The road has been in really bad shape since Hurricane Hilary, and this week we got it repaired. We got a contractor out there for the repair.

REMOVING THINGS FROM PUBLIC LANDS: Mary brought up an incident quite a while ago, BLM was involved, also Tom Budlong, Bill Maddux were involved, however, they removed a large wooden ore car out of the Modoc Mine near the site of Lookout City. Tom Budlong took it and was suppose to repair it, and it disappeared and has not been seen since. Marty Dickus might know something. We think it may have been 10 to 15 years ago. Sam thinks it could have been around 2005.

VARIOUS PROJECTS THAT ARE IN DIFFERENT STAGES: We've been having conversation with CalTrans District 9. The Freeman Gulch stretch of Hwy 14, we are working on getting a divider in that area, additional passing lanes on 14 and shoulders to make it safer. We also have an OHV Grant to improve the OHV crossing. There was also some discussion about a guzzler that was affected by the plane crash fire on Black Mountain.

The meeting was closed by Charlie Hattendorf at 6:55pm.

Respectfully submitted by: Mary Grimsley, Secretary