

1 BUREAU OF LAND MANAGEMENT DESERT ADVISORY COUNCIL
2 MEETING

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6
7 Saturday, August 7, 2021

8 8:43 a.m.

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11 Remote via Zoom

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15
16 Reported by: Oliver Goodman-Waters

17 JOB No.: 4742270

A P P E A R A N C E S

List of Attendees:

Michelle Van Der Linden, Public Affairs Officer

Andrew Archuleta, District Manager, California Desert District

Greg Miller, Associate District Manager, California Desert District

Mike Ahrens, Field Manager, Needles Office

Ryan Chatterton, Field Manager, El Centro Office

Tim Gilloon, Field Manager, Palm Springs - South Coast Office

Katrina Symons, Field Manager, Barstow Office

Carl Symons, Field Manager, Ridgecrest Office

Randy Banis, Chairman, DAC

James Bagley, Public Member, DAC

Nathan Francis, Member, DAC

Richard Holliday, Member, DAC

Paul Martin, Member, DAC

William Mitchell, Member, DAC

Jayne Powell, Energy and Mineral Development Interest, DAC

Robert Robinson, Tribe Representative, DAC

Dan Taylor, Film Industry Representative

Ed Stovin, Off Road Vehicle Representative

Matthew Gibbs, Technical Support

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Amy Fesnock, Presenter
Dana Stephenson, Presenter
Paul Whitehead, Member at Large
James Gannon, Presenter

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1 P R O C E E D I N G S

2 REPORTER: Good morning. My name is
3 Oliver Goodman-Waters. I am the reporter assigned by
4 Veritext to take the record of this proceeding. I am
5 a Notary authorized to take acknowledgements and
6 administer oaths in California. We are now on the
7 record.

8 This is a hearing for the Bureau of
9 Land Management California Desert District Advisory
10 Council taken for public comment at 8:48 a.m. on
11 August 7, 2021 held remotely via Veritext virtual
12 technology.

13 MANAGER ARCHULETA: -- California
14 Desert District and also the Designated Federal
15 Official for the Desert Advisory Committee. So again,
16 thanks everyone for joining us. You know, we're still
17 maneuvering through the COVID issues, but glad that we
18 can at least meet virtually. We tentatively have a
19 face-to-face meeting scheduled in October, so looking
20 forward to that and hope it -- it does work out.

21 So I'm going to do a roll call here of
22 the BLM Field Managers and have them do just a real
23 quick introduction of themselves. And then I'm going
24 to do the same thing with the DAC members. And then
25 once we've done that, we'll go over some Zoom

1 protocols. And then I'm going to turn the meeting
2 over to our esteemed chair, Mr. Randy Banis. So let's
3 start out with a roll call here with the Field
4 Managers. So actually I'm going to start with Greg
5 Miller, who is the associate district manager. He's
6 new in that position. So, Greg.

7 MR. MILLER: Yes, good morning
8 everybody. I'm Greg Miller, I'm the associate
9 district manager for the California Desert District.
10 I've been with the Desert District for 13 years now.
11 Started in the Renewal Energy Coordination Office here
12 in the Desert District and moved my way into this
13 position just last year. Welcome, everybody.

14 MR. ARCHULETA. Thank you, Greg. Let's
15 go to Mike Ahrens.

16 MR. AHRENS: Sorry about that, I had
17 trouble with the mute button. Good morning everybody
18 and welcome to the DAC Meeting here. Mike Ahrens, I'm
19 the Needles Field Manager there over the Needles Field
20 Office. I've been in the Needles Field Office for I
21 think it's about 15 years now, and with the BLM a
22 little over 20. So yeah, happy to be here. Look
23 forward to the meeting.

24 MANAGER ARCHULETA: Great, thank you
25 Mike. And Ryan Chatterton.

1 MR. CHATTERTON: Thanks, Andrew. Good
2 morning. Ryan Chatterton, I am the Field Manager for
3 our El Centro Field Office down in the southern part
4 of California. Been with the Bureau of Land
5 Management now for 13 years and have two years here in
6 my position as the Field Manager of the El Centro
7 Field Office. Thanks, Andrew.

8 MANAGER ARCHULETA: So Ryan was our
9 newest Field Manager, but he's been able to hand that
10 off to our newest Field Manager, Tim Gilloon. Tim?

11 MR. GILLOON: Yeah, thank you, Andrew.
12 Tim Gilloon, I'm the new Field Manager for the Palm
13 Springs South Coast Field Office. Just moved here 34
14 days ago, BLM officially in this position since April,
15 moved out from Colorado. And I spent about four years
16 with the Forest Service prior to that. And I've got
17 some private industry experience that I'm bringing to
18 the table also as a contractor for BOD and also as
19 commercial property management. And I've also got
20 about 18 years' service in so far for military between
21 active and reserve guard enlisted in officer. So
22 looking forward to working with everybody. Thank you.

23 MANAGER ARCHULETA: Thanks, Tim. We're
24 super excited to have Tim on board. He's got a great
25 family, and they've all moved here to the Palm Springs

1 area, and hopefully you'll get the chance to meet
2 everybody or meet Tim and others here in October. So
3 Katrina Symons.

4 MS. SYMONS: Hey, good morning.
5 Katrina Symons, Barstow Field Manager. And I've been
6 on board since November of 2012. Good to see all of
7 you.

8 MANAGER ARCHULETA: Thank you, Katrina.
9 And Carl Symons.

10 MR. SYMONS: Good morning. It's good
11 to see everybody. I'm Carl Symons, I'm the Ridgecrest
12 Field Manager. I've also been here since November of
13 2012. I also did a detail in 2011.

14 MANAGER ARCHULETA: Great. Thank you,
15 Carl. We'll have some other BLM staff giving
16 presentations, and they'll introduce themselves right
17 before they go onto those presentations today. So I'm
18 going to go over to the DAC members. And if you could
19 just introduce yourself, you know, just a little bit
20 about yourself. So let's start with our chair, Randy
21 Banis.

22 CHAIR BANIS: Good morning, everybody.
23 It's great to be back with you all. I'm a
24 representative of the public-at-large, and I'm a
25 resident of the Desert District, on the edge of the

1 Desert District, in Leona Valley. In my spare time, I
2 work in the shadow of Ed Waldheim as President of
3 Friends of El Mirage and Friends of Jawbone and
4 enjoying the partnership that we enjoy with the
5 Ridgecrest Field Office and the Barstow Field Office
6 on those projects. So thanks again for having us
7 back, Michelle, Andrew, for setting this all up. And
8 it was nice of you to host it.

9 MANAGER ARCHULETA: Great. Thank you,
10 Randy. James Bagley.

11 MR. BAGLEY: Hi, good morning. My name
12 is Jim Bagley. I'm a resident of Twentynine Palms.
13 I'm one of the public members, also. My family goes
14 back three generations in the California desert. My
15 grandparents were homesteaders in Twentynine Palms in
16 the 1920s. I wear many different hats. I'm a real
17 estate broker, commercial pilot, and former mayor of
18 Twentynine Palms. And I'm glad to be on the DAC
19 representing the public.

20 MANAGER ARCHULETA: Thank you, Jim.
21 And Nathan Francis.

22 MR. FRANCIS: Hello, my name is Nathan
23 Francis. I'm a member of the DAC and served one term
24 before. And I work for U.S. Borax.

25 MANAGER ARCHULETA: Great. Thank you,

1 Nathan. And Richard Holliday, I believe he's on the
2 phone.

3 MR. HOLLIDAY: I'm right here. My name
4 is Dick Holliday, and I've been going to the desert
5 for a long time. I was on the DAC from 2008 to 2011,
6 and I was on a subgroup for quite a while from ISDRA.
7 And I retired from the Edison Company in 1996, so
8 that's about all. Thank you.

9 MANAGER ARCHULETA: Thank you, Dick.
10 You were hiding in the upper left-hand corner of my
11 screen, but I see you now. All right. Paul Martin.

12 MR. MARTIN: Good morning, everyone.
13 I'm Paul Martin. This is my second term with the DAC.
14 I'm with public-at-large. I'm a mining engineer,
15 retired now, with 19 years of experience in the high
16 desert. I'm happy to join the meeting today and look
17 forward to, you know, assisting or helping out in any
18 way. Thanks.

19 MANAGER ARCHULETA: Great. Thank you,
20 Paul. And Billy Mitchell.

21 MR. MITCHELL: Yes, I'm a fourth-
22 generation cattle rancher here in the Mojave Desert.
23 My family has had probably six of the major ranches
24 since the late 1920s. Currently I run Rattlesnake
25 Canyon Ranch. I've had that for I guess 23 years.

1 And I'm the chair of San Bernardino County Rangers
2 Improvement, the REAC Board, for the last 15 years I
3 guess. And other than that, I just slowly get rebuilt
4 and punch cows.

5 MANAGER ARCHULETA: Thank you, Billy.
6 Appreciate that. And one of our new members, Jayne
7 Powell.

8 MS. POWELL: Good morning. My name is
9 Jayne Powell, and I represent and Energy and Mineral
10 Development Interest portion of the DAC. I have been
11 with Granite up until the end of May, since 2007. And
12 I retired the end of May. I'm now consulting on my
13 own part time while I enjoy having some free time life
14 as well. And in addition to participating in the DAC,
15 I'm also on the Region 7 Colorado River Basin Regional
16 Water Quality Control Board. And I look forward to
17 participating with this group. Thank you.

18 MANAGER ARCHULETA: Thank you, Jayne.
19 You've got a lot on your plate in retirement, as well.

20 MS. POWELL: Yes, why say retirement?

21 MANAGER ARCHULETA: Yeah. All right.
22 Robert Robinson.

23 MR. ROBINSON: Good morning. My name
24 is Bob Robinson. I represent the interest of tribes
25 on the DAC. This is my second term.

1 MANAGER ARCHULETA: Thank you, Rob.
2 Good to hear from you. And Ed Stovin.

3 MR. STOVIN: I think you can hear me
4 now. I represent off road vehicle users. I'm
5 president of the San Diego Off Road Coalition. I'm
6 president of Friends of Ocotillo Wells. I'm the
7 director of the California Off Road Vehicle
8 Association. I'm a San Diego County Fish and Wildlife
9 Advisory Commissioner. And I found out I've just
10 recently been appointed to National Forest Region 5
11 Recreational Advisory Council. I like dirt bikes.

12 MANAGER ARCHULETA: Busy guy as well.
13 The real question is, does the three-wheeler actually
14 run, Ed?

15 MR. STOVIN: I'm sorry?

16 MANAGER ARCHULETA: Does the three-
17 wheeler actually run?

18 MR. STOVIN: Oh yeah, it runs well.
19 You want to meet out there?

20 MANAGER ARCHULETA: I haven't seen one
21 for a while. Okay. Let's move on here. Dan Taylor.

22 MR. TAYLOR: Good morning. I am
23 representing the film industry on this panel. And I
24 am the co-film commissioner for Riverside County. I
25 also am the co-film commissioner for the city of Big

1 Bear Lake and the city of Temecula. I'm also the
2 president of the president of the Inland Empire Film
3 Services. And I work with the majority of the film
4 industry that comes out to the Inland Empire, both
5 Riverside and San Bernardino Counties. And I'm happy
6 to be here.

7 MANAGER ARCHULETA: Thank you, Dan.
8 And we do have a lot of film industry working out in
9 the desert, that's for sure. And Paul Whitehead.

10 MR. WHITEHEAD: Hello. My name is Paul
11 Whitehead, and I am a member-at-large from Palm
12 Springs. I'm a high school teacher, and I look
13 forward to today. It's going to be fun.

14 MANAGER ARCHULETA: Great. Thank you,
15 Paul. That is everybody for BLM and the DAC. And
16 most of you know Michelle. She is our public affairs
17 officer, and I'm not sure what we would do without
18 her, especially for events like this. So thank you
19 Michelle for all the work you put into this. And I
20 will turn it over to you to talk about, give us some
21 Zoom tips there.

22 MS. VAN DER LINDEN: Thank you, Andrew.
23 So before I get into the Zoom tips, Matthew, do you
24 want to pop your camera on real quick so I can
25 introduce you? These meetings as you all know during

1 COVID are a lot to juggle behind the scenes, so we
2 have Matthew with us here today. He is assisting me
3 with all the Zoom stuff behind the scenes and is
4 extremely helpful.

5 So he has already put his phone number
6 up in the chat. I'll add mine there. So if you have
7 any technical difficulties during the meeting, just
8 reach out to either of us and we'll do our best to
9 navigate. Want to say a quick "hi", Matthew?

10 MR. GIBBS: Hi, everybody. Happy to be
11 here helping out. Thanks for joining in.

12 MS. VAN DER LINDEN: Thank you. So the
13 following is for DAC members. I know we've already
14 gone over some of this information, but just to make
15 sure that everybody is familiar and comfortable with
16 the meeting moving forward. If you could just take a
17 minute and at the bottom of your screen, you'll have a
18 ribbon of icons there. Over in the far left-hand side
19 is your mute button. That's how you turn yourself on
20 and off.

21 When you're speaking, right next to the
22 mute button you'll notice that there's a little up
23 carrot there. If you find that you are having issues
24 and you need to switch to phone audio, there's an
25 option there that will let you do that so you can

1 actually move this meeting to your phone if you find
2 that you're having bandwidth issues or whatnot. So
3 that's a very helpful tip.

4 The button next to that is your video.
5 We ask that you have your video on when you're
6 speaking, and feel free to turn it off if that makes
7 you more comfortable when you're not presenting.
8 Whatever makes you most comfortable is great.

9 Matthew, would you mind quickly sharing
10 a screen of the agenda so we can point out the day?
11 You all should have received this already, but we've
12 got a couple of scheduled breaks at 10:45, we're
13 scheduled to do lunch at noon, and then another break
14 at 3. Please be patient with us as some of these
15 times may slip based on presentations and whatnot, but
16 we're going to try to keep this as on schedule as
17 possible. Thank you, Matthew.

18 We also have a number of presentations
19 to go through, and there will be time for the DAC
20 members to ask questions after each of the
21 presentations. We ask that you hold your questions
22 until that time and when you do have a question,
23 please raise your hand and identify yourself before
24 speaking. That will help with the process.

25 At the bottom of your screen is also

1 the option that allows you to raise your hand. So
2 like I said, if you do have a question following the
3 presentation, just raise your hand. We'll call on you
4 and identify yourself before speaking so everybody
5 knows who everybody is during the meeting.

6 Although this meeting is not being
7 recorded, we do have a court reporter who is
8 transcribing the meeting so we will have a record.
9 Again, Matthew has already put his phone number in the
10 chat. I will do the same. So if you have technical
11 issues, contact either of us and we will help you
12 navigate. That information was for the DAC members.
13 The following information is for members of the public
14 wishing to participate in public comment.

15 So during the public comment period,
16 you will have the ability to address the DAC during
17 via audio only. We will ask you that you keep your
18 comments to three minutes. We'll actually have a
19 countdown timer that will help you with your timing.
20 Once you have reached that three minutes, your
21 microphone will be muted. We anticipate that we may
22 have additional time for public comment, and if that
23 is the case we will allow speakers a second three
24 minutes.

25 We ask that all attendees show mutual

1 respect for each other and BLM speakers and not
2 exhibit unprofessional conduct or use inappropriate
3 language. And violation of any of this may result in
4 being removed from the meeting. So we ask that
5 everybody be on their best behavior, which we know you
6 will be.

7 To the best of our ability, speakers
8 will be called in the order of when you've raised your
9 hand and once the public comment period opens. And we
10 will work through as many speakers as possible during
11 the 45-minute period. If we have more people wishing
12 to speak than time allows, written comment can also be
13 submitted to our office. I'll put the office address
14 and all of that information in the chat for you.

15 And also just so you're aware the
16 public is always welcome to submit questions or
17 comments anytime to the BLM or to the DAC using that
18 same mailing address or e-mail that I will put into
19 the chat. So thank you very much for all of that.
20 We're going to have a great meeting.

21 MANAGER ARCHULETA: All right. Thank
22 you, Michelle. Appreciate all the help there. And
23 like she said, if you have any questions throughout,
24 you know, raise your hand. Whether the question is
25 about the presentation or about Zoom or about

1 navigating the platform there. So I'm going to turn
2 the meeting over to Randy. And Randy, if you have any
3 opening comments and then guide us into the DAC
4 report, sir.

5 CHAIR BANIS: Oh of course, happy to.
6 And it's nice this time we don't have to direct people
7 to which way to the bathrooms. First thing I'd like
8 to do today, the number one thing I'd really like to
9 do is I'm not able to see the public sitting in front
10 of us. And we, all of us, if I can speak on behalf of
11 the DAC members, I think that's one of the things we
12 most enjoy about our meetings is seeing the public and
13 interacting with the public.

14 And I don't know who's on board today,
15 who's registered and who's been able to join us, but I
16 want to give a special shout out to the rockhounding
17 community. They've really had a lot of interactions
18 with me between meetings and keep me posted about
19 their activities and their needs and the changes that
20 they're facing in how they pursue their activities.
21 So thanks to the rockhounds. I know that there's some
22 who joined us today.

23 Also I'd like to say hello to my
24 colleagues from the Public Lands Roundtable of
25 Ridgecrest. You're familiar with many of them because

1 they're regular attendees of our Desert Advisory
2 Committee meetings and you're well used to hearing
3 from them during the public comment period. So I hope
4 they're here with us today.

5 Speaking of the Ridgecrest Public
6 Roundtable and the Desert Advisory Council, I do want
7 to just acknowledge with heavy heart the loss of our
8 colleague Jim Kenney. I believe the BLM is going to
9 talk more about Jim's role, but I want to acknowledge
10 that, him not being with us today.

11 Also a Ridgecrest Public Lands
12 Roundtable member that we lost recently is also a
13 familiar face to the Desert Advisory Council for many
14 years, and that's Dave Matthew. Dave Matthew was a
15 regular one who had a unique mix and humor and
16 cantankerous approach to a lot of the vexing issues
17 that the BLM works on. So we'll miss hearing from
18 him.

19 With that said, also about the public
20 and the public at large, during the pandemic, the
21 desert saw a lot of love. Our public lands saw a lot
22 of love from the public. That love didn't come
23 without impacts. Trash and probably Billy has seen a
24 lot of extra love on the roads and trails in the
25 canyon behind his place as well and impacts from that.

1 But you know, thank goodness for the
2 public lands that they were there for the public when
3 the public really, really needed them. And they still
4 need them today and even more so. So many of the
5 public has been introduced to the wonders of our
6 public lands, sometimes for the first time.

7 And it was heartwarming to see
8 everybody there, new people. New people with new ways
9 to share activities with their families in the
10 backcountry. So I look forward to hearing from Dana
11 Stephenson who we've worked closely with when she was
12 at the Ridgecrest Field Office on other recreational
13 issues during this time.

14 With that, I just want to close with my
15 own place that I've shown some love for recently.
16 It's my favorite place to go. People know that. They
17 know it so much; you can't see it but on my water
18 glass are the GPS coordinates of this favorite place
19 that I love to go to. This is a gift from someone,
20 and that place is Conglomerate Mesa. And Conglomerate
21 Mesa is in the news and is a hot topic again with the
22 BLM Desert District and the Ridgecrest Field Office.

23 And I've been visiting that place for
24 decades now, and I'm concerned about the impacts to
25 recreation and actually the impacts to the activities

1 that I pursue in that area from the proposed change of
2 access for an exploratory drilling project in the
3 Conglomerate Mesa. I hope to hear about that more, if
4 not today, in the coming days at the Ridgecrest
5 Roundtable. And for those of you who have known this
6 area, I wanted to put it on your radar in case you've
7 missed it that there's a proposed action there.

8 With that said, thank you. That was my
9 report, and I tried to use my report to cover things
10 that I don't expect to hear on the agenda. That would
11 be the advice to my colleagues; if you have things
12 that aren't on the agenda but on your list, this is a
13 good time to bring them up now. So with that I'll
14 close and yield the floor to the next participant.
15 Michelle, do you want to continue calling the list or
16 shall I continue to lead?

17 MS. VAN DER LINDEN: I'd be happy to do
18 that if you'd like.

19 CHAIR BANIS: Go right ahead, please.

20 MS. VAN DER LINDEN: Mr. Bagley, you
21 have the floor.

22 MR. BAGLEY: Thank you. I had to come
23 back on. I'm glad to be back at least via Zoom
24 meeting. Like Randy, I have a great concern about not
25 being able to meet in public. We are the public

1 interaction with the Bureau of Land Management and
2 there is no substitute for the personal interaction
3 that we have when we're out on our field inspections
4 the day before the DAC meeting and during the DAC
5 meeting itself. So I'm glad to hear, Andrew, that
6 we've got an October meeting scheduled. And I hope in
7 the future we'll get back to this in-person schedule
8 in a safe and effective way.

9 COVID-19 has changed the landscape for
10 all of us, but the public lands are more important
11 than ever for people to find remote and satisfying
12 recreational opportunities. And I'm glad to be
13 involved and look forward to seeing you all in person
14 in the near future.

15 MS. VAN DER LINDEN: Thank you, Mr.
16 Bagley. Mr. Francis, you have the floor.

17 MR. FRANCIS: Sorry about that, I'm
18 trying to get unmute. Yeah, I'm just happy to be here
19 again and be with the group and hearing the public
20 comments about our public lands. And agree this last
21 year and a half, they have been heavily used.

22 MS. VAN DER LINDEN: Thank you, Mr.
23 Francis. Mr. Kenney, you have the floor. Mr. Kenney,
24 if you're available, you have the floor.

25 MR. GIBBS: Michelle, I think you can

1 keep moving down the list.

2 MS. VAN DER LINDEN: We'll circle back.

3 MR. GIBBS: Sure.

4 MS. VAN DER LINDEN: Mr. Martin, you
5 have the floor.

6 CHAIR BANIS: We can use that as a
7 moment of silence for Jim.

8 MS. VAN DER LINDEN: Oh my goodness.
9 Thank you. Mr. Martin, you have the floor.

10 MR. MARTIN: Hello everyone. Yeah, I'm
11 looking forward to working with everyone this season
12 again and looking forward to our meetings in person.
13 And I was with Mineral Resources. Now I'm with the
14 public at large, so I'm just looking forward to
15 helping out in any way possible. So thank you for
16 having me here today.

17 MS. VAN DER LINDEN: Thank you. Mr.
18 Mitchell, you have the floor.

19 MR. MITCHELL: Yes, so we all should
20 have a moment of silence, too, for Jerry Hilliard. He
21 has passed away I think maybe a month ago. He did a
22 lot of work on the CDCA with the ranchers and
23 developing the first plan we had. I just think we
24 should bring him up. And I don't know what I
25 represent, I think I'm one of the cattlemen, but I

1 don't know what they have the title for. It used to
2 be renewable resources, I thought. But I have no idea
3 what it is now. But if you acknowledge that, I would
4 appreciate it. Thank you.

5 MS. VAN DER LINDEN: Thank you, Mr.
6 Mitchell. Ms. Powell, you have the floor.

7 MS. POWELL: Thank you, Michelle. And
8 to echo everyone else's comments, I'm glad that we are
9 able to meet via Zoom and look forward to meeting in
10 person and to having our field trips as well. And I
11 wanted to particularly thank the staff for all the
12 work that they've been doing on the EIRs and moving
13 the projects forward through the COVID period and not
14 letting them languish because it is important to
15 everyone whose project is up for consideration or
16 development of the EIRs.

17 And particularly with all of the energy
18 and the mineral resource activities, energy is a huge,
19 huge issue and the mineral resources, the need for
20 those particularly with the infrastructure package for
21 mineral resources that might go through Congress
22 eventually. So thank you for your efforts there.

23 MS. VAN DER LINDEN: Thank you, Ms.
24 Powell. Mr. Robinson, you have the floor.

25 MR. ROBINSON: Hello. I'll also be

1 happy to have back the in-person meetings. I think
2 the people that are at somewhat of a disadvantage are
3 new members who haven't had an in-person meeting. And
4 I think that the value is great.

5 So I've been working with the Owens
6 Valley tribe on a number of issues up in the North
7 Owens Valley and then also with the different solar
8 projects on the desert, most of which are on private
9 property, actually. And then I have some questions
10 later on regarding the Ridgecrest Field Office, also.
11 That's all I have for now. Thank you.

12 MS. VAN DER LINDEN: Thank you, Mr.
13 Robinson. Mr. Stovin, you have the floor.

14 MR. STOVIN: I'm with the San Diego Off
15 Road Coalition, and we have a couple of activities
16 planned for the California Desert District area. Otay
17 Mountain is managed by the Palm Springs Office, and it
18 is right along the border and kind of close to the
19 coast.

20 And we're hosting a clean up out there
21 September 25th, Public Lands Day. I've heard that
22 there's a lot of trash along there from shooters, from
23 international travelers, and from off roaders. I've
24 never heard of a cleanup out there, but we treasure
25 the area and like being able to recreate out there.

1 So we're having a cleanup.

2 In November, we're hosting the Lost
3 Lizards Fun Run, a poker run that we do by
4 Superstition Mountain and land that's managed by the
5 El Central Field Office. This is our 16th one, and I
6 believe it's our sixth one in the BLM land. We're
7 also having a cleanup that same day, so we're going to
8 have a dumpster out there picking up trash. So we
9 appreciate having these areas to recreate in. That's
10 it.

11 MS. VAN DER LINDEN: Thank you, Mr.
12 Stovin. Mr. Taylor, you have the floor.

13 MR. TAYLOR: I apologize for not
14 looking at the camera here, but my monitor is over
15 here. So forgive me for not looking at you guys. As
16 I said before, I represent the film industry. And the
17 film industry likes to film where people recreate.
18 They like to film where companies mine, where
19 renewable energies are built. They like to film in
20 all those areas, so my goal is to try and encourage
21 more EAs to be done in those areas to include filming
22 so that the economic impact from the film industry in
23 the Desert Region is increased.

24 Because filming has, in the Inland
25 Empire itself, Riverside and San Bernardino County,

1 since '93 I want to say, has been almost \$1.4 billion
2 of economic impact to the local community. So I want
3 to see that increased and be good partners with the
4 local community around federal lands and help them to
5 be able to benefit from that economic impact.

6 MS. VAN DER LINDEN: Thank you, Mr.
7 Taylor. Mr. Whitehead, you have the floor.

8 MR. WHITEHEAD: Hello. Once again my
9 name is Paul Whitehead, and I'm a high school teacher.
10 And I want to thank Michelle for all of the e-mails
11 and keeping us informed of everything that's going on.
12 I appreciate it and I read them all. So thank you,
13 Michelle. As a high school teacher, I want to promote
14 desert safety in our schools. I think that's
15 important for kids of all ages, especially high school
16 kids that may be out there doing things in the desert
17 and you know, driving and recreating.

18 So I believe, you know, things like
19 staying hydrated and just basic desert safety. I'd
20 love to do more promotion. And I remember one of the
21 meetings we had last year where I talked about these
22 kinds of promotional activities, but then there, you
23 know, wasn't much school going on. So maybe in this
24 next year I'll be able to, you know, spearhead a
25 project. Thank you.

1 MS. VAN DER LINDEN: Thank you for that
2 Mr. Whitehead. Mr. Banis, you have the floor.

3 CHAIR BANIS: Thank you. Everybody
4 caught up, huh? Sounds great. Let's go onto the next
5 item of business. I'd like to call on Andrew
6 Archuleta, our Desert District Manager, to present the
7 report of the BLM and you may even be calling on some
8 of your colleagues to help.

9 MANAGER ARCHULETA: Let's see here. I
10 think we're going to start out with subgroups, Randy.
11 But before I jump into that, I wanted to say I really
12 appreciate all the work that everybody is doing and
13 all the groups that you all are involved with. It's
14 amazing just how many different things are going on
15 out there.

16 And some of you are already doing this,
17 but if you're not, if BLM can partner with you, Ed on
18 that cleanup, for example, if you're needing some
19 support there from BLM, be sure you reach out to the
20 local Field Manager. And we'll see how we can help
21 you out there.

22 So there's been a lot of questions
23 about subgroups, and I just want to share a little bit
24 of information about it and have a discussion of where
25 we want to go with subgroups. So I'm going to share

1 my screen. Hopefully I can do this successfully. All
2 right. Michelle, can you see that?

3 MS. VAN DER LINDEN: Yes.

4 CHAIR BANIS: And I can, too.

5 MANAGER ARCHULETA: All right. Thank
6 you.

7 MR. GIBBS: Andrew, we're seeing the
8 full PowerPoint window. So if you want to try to put
9 it into Presenter Mode you can do that now. Right
10 next to the zoom in on the bottom right of the window
11 is that little button that looks like a -- yeah, there
12 you go. Perfect.

13 MANAGER ARCHULETA: Did that change it?

14 MR. GIBBS: Not yet. It might be
15 processing.

16 MANAGER ARCHULETA: Give me just a
17 second here.

18 MR. GIBBS: Now at the top there where
19 you see Display Settings, click Display Settings and
20 then there should be an option for like Swap Presenter
21 Mode. Do you see the Display Settings there at the
22 top left?

23 MANAGER ARCHULETA: I do not.

24 MR. GIBBS: Right above where your
25 mouse is right now, there's Show Taskbar, Display

1 Settings, and End Slideshow. So three options at the
2 top of the Presenter Mode window.

3 MANAGER ARCHULETA: Click on which one?

4 MR. GIBBS: Display Settings.

5 MANAGER ARCHULETA: I am not seeing
6 that.

7 MR. GIBBS: Right next to your mouse.

8 MANAGER ARCHULETA: That one?

9 MR. GIBBS: Yep. So you click on that
10 and then Swap Presenter View and Slideshow. That
11 should do it.

12 MANAGER ARCHULETA: Did that work?

13 MR. GIBBS: Stand by. It looks like
14 it's loading. It's not doing anything yet. Maybe the
15 computer is having a hard time. Do you want me pull
16 up the slideshow?

17 MANAGER ARCHULETA: Yeah, that might be
18 easier. I'm not sure what's going on here. I'm
19 seeing it fine on my end.

20 CHAIR BANIS: Looks good now.

21 MANAGER ARCHULETA: All right. You can
22 tell who are the newbies to the technology here. We
23 we'll go ahead with the back subgroups. There's been
24 some questions about, can we continue to have the
25 subgroups and which subgroups exist here in the Desert

1 District? So I just want to cover a few things and
2 then like I said open it up to discussion. So next
3 slide.

4 So subgroups or subcommittees are
5 allowed, you know, under FACA. They must fall under
6 and report to a chartered advisory committee. That
7 for us is the DAC. And technically the subgroups are
8 formed by the BLM, but they actually report to you
9 all, to the DAC. So because they're reporting to the
10 DAC and not to the BLM, most of the rules that apply
11 to you, the DAC, the parent advisory committee, don't
12 actually apply to a subgroup. So it makes it a little
13 easier for those subgroups to function.

14 One of the requirements is that the
15 designated federal official or an alternate must
16 attend the subgroup meetings. And then any
17 recommendations that come out of a subgroup have to be
18 deliberated by the full DAC before they can be adopted
19 because it's the full DAC that falls under that
20 chartered advisory committee.

21 So subgroups can be temporary. We can
22 form one to work on a specific issue. When that issue
23 is resolved or goes away, that subgroup would go away.
24 Or they can be more permanent to focus on an area like
25 Dumont Dunes, Jawbone, or Imperial Sand Dunes, for

1 example. Next slide.

2 So these are the subgroups that I am
3 aware of, and the Field Managers have let me know
4 about. I know Randy, you have been involved a long
5 time with the DAC and other here, you've had subgroups
6 up and running and there may be others.

7 But the ones I'm aware of are the
8 subgroup for Dumont Dunes out of Barstow. There was
9 one that existed for Imperial Sand Dunes. I don't
10 believe it has met in quite a while. That's out of El
11 Centro. I don't know if a subgroup ever formed, but I
12 know there was a lot of discussion about a subgroup
13 for Mojave Trails, and that's out the Needles Field
14 Office. And then I'll start with you, Randy. Are you
15 aware of any others that have existed or that we might
16 want to --

17 CHAIR BANIS: You know, there were a
18 number of subgroups that really did terrific work and
19 worked very hard on an ad hoc basis on issues that had
20 its time in the decision-making arena. And then the
21 subgroup's mission terminated, the West Mojave Root
22 Network subgroup. We had a DRECP subgroup. And all
23 of those really functioned and did some great work.

24 But as for ongoing groups that still
25 have their missions in front of them, Dumont Dunes and

1 Imperial Sand Dune subgroups are the only two that I'm
2 aware of that continued to have calls for action. The
3 Mojave Trails National Monument subgroup was
4 authorized, and it got to the point of coming up with
5 how many members and what interests would be
6 represented on that subgroup. And at that point the
7 process stalled.

8 So the Mojave Trails National Monument
9 subgroup did not see formation or see any action. And
10 again that's all I'm aware of that's on the table for
11 functioning and appointed subgroups.

12 And may I just say also one of the
13 reasons that the Imperial Sand Dune group was unable
14 to meet regularly in a formal capacity was because of
15 a lack of DAC members from the southern-most part of
16 the state and Ed Stovin has served as a volunteer
17 before he served on the Desert Advisory Committee. Ed
18 Stovin served on the Imperial Sand Dunes subgroup for
19 many years, and it's nice to see that DAC has direct
20 representation as far as that nexus is required to
21 have a DAC member present at the subgroup meetings.

22 MANAGER ARCHULETA: All right.
23 Matthew, go ahead and go to the next slide. There's
24 not much on it there. But I want to open it up to
25 questions or comments and then we'll talk a little bit

1 about what I see as the next steps. But anybody have
2 questions or comments about what we covered or
3 comments on a subgroup?

4 MR. HOLLIDAY: I'd like to also mention
5 that we used to have a subgroup for the special
6 recreation permit that was to help the people that
7 were running races and other things to work more with
8 the BLM to get special recreation permits processed a
9 little bit better. And I don't know what the status
10 of that one is.

11 MANAGER ARCHULETA: Okay. Thank you.

12 CHAIR BANIS: If I may, the special
13 recreation subgroup was another one that had a lot of
14 meetings and actually produced a product. And that
15 was a template operating plan for commercial events,
16 particularly commercial motorized events. And I
17 thought that was a really great product.

18 And I know that the BLM has put many
19 pieces of that template into its working operations.
20 But that sort of marked the end of that group. I
21 don't think it had another work product envisioned for
22 it yet, but I know that there was discussions from the
23 non-motorized community about hoping to resolve
24 ambiguities with smaller clubs and trying to better
25 define casual use versus a permitted event especially

1 with respect to advertising requirements and other
2 triggers that were sort of from the predigital era.

3 MR. HOLLIDAY: Like having a wedding or
4 something like that. Some of that stuff became quite
5 hard to process --

6 MANAGER ARCHULETA: Okay.

7 CHAIR BANIS: Well I do know of
8 weddings that have been permitted since. That's for
9 sure. I hear about them periodically. But it came to
10 be confusing if a club of 12 members, it could be a
11 garden club, wants to go to on a hike at Surprise
12 Canyon to look at the flowers. If they pitched in for
13 lunch, if they put it on their website, how did all
14 these things play into those rules with respect to was
15 there a fee or was advertising conducted? So it's
16 these smaller little groups that we're just bringing
17 up the points that they didn't know where the line
18 was.

19 MANAGER ARCHULETA: We have Dana
20 Stephenson on a little bit later. Maybe she can speak
21 just a little bit to that when she's giving her
22 presentation.

23 MS. POWELL: Since I'm new to the DAC,
24 could you share what the focus of the Imperial Sand
25 Dunes subgroup was intended to be and what their

1 objectives and work products were if any that have
2 either been set or produced?

3 MANAGER ARCHULETA: They've not
4 functioned since I've been here. I'm sorry, Randy. I
5 was going to see if Ed could respond to that.

6 MR. STOVIN: I'm on. The Imperial Sand
7 Dunes is a very heavily used recreation area. They
8 may get a million visits a year. And users are
9 interested in the management of the dunes. There's a
10 wide variety of activities that management does,
11 anywhere from removing sand from roads. Believe it or
12 not overnight a foot of sand can blow on a road that
13 would separate motorhomes from the outside world.

14 There's an endangered species there,
15 the Peirson's milk vetch and all kind of activities
16 that take place. There's a whole gamut of activities
17 around there that people are interested in. And we
18 can all get together and discuss problems and
19 solutions.

20 There's a dirt road, a wash road, that
21 many thousands of people use to camp and recreate
22 from. And there's been a chronic dust problem there.
23 And the BLM has worked on a material they put on the
24 road that suppresses dust. Discuss all kind of stuff.
25 It's a very worthwhile group to have meetings. I

1 don't know. Do you have any questions about it?

2 MS. POWELL: Well I'd like to help get
3 that rejuvenated when we're allowed to meet in person.

4 MR. STOVIN: Yeah, there's a lot of
5 people that would like to see that come back to life.

6 MR. BAGLEY: I'd also like to volunteer
7 if there's a shortage of DAC members for the Imperial
8 Sand Dunes, I would be interested. And I'm also very
9 interested in the Mojave Trails group we've been
10 talking about for a long time.

11 MR. STOVIN: Dick Holliday's been to
12 quite a few. I think every meeting I've been to Dick
13 was there.

14 MR. HOLLIDAY: Yeah, I've been on a
15 subgroup for the prior TRT for 20 years. It does have
16 a lot of good input from the users and also allows the
17 people like myself that are out there to transfer some
18 information from the BLM out to the public people.

19 MR. STOVIN: And vice versa. Sometimes
20 the BLM needs to hear from the users.

21 CHAIR BANIS: Hi Billy.

22 MR. MITCHELL: Yeah, the problem in
23 Rattlesnake Canyon is they advertise these guys taking
24 people up through it. Is there criteria how many
25 people are allowed to go? Like I had 100 Jeeps one

1 weekend that went through two different Saturdays and
2 Sundays with no permits. I asked them if they had a
3 permit, and they said no. Is there a regulation for
4 that?

5 CHAIR BANIS: Yeah I was just going to
6 say those are exactly the kind of things that that
7 subgroup used to talk about, honestly. Those are the
8 kinds of issues, but I did want to just say one item
9 in response to Jayne's question about its mission.
10 The Dumont Dunes and the ISDRE subgroups, both of
11 those areas involve user fees. There are very few fee
12 areas in the Desert District.

13 And because there are user fees at both
14 of those locations, there was interest among the users
15 to work with the BLM in seeing how their monies are
16 spent. Because the fees that are collected at those
17 fee areas go directly back to those fee areas. And so
18 that was part of the impetus as well.

19 MS. POWELL: Thank you.

20 MR. TAYLOR: I would also like to ask a
21 question about starting a subgroup for the interest
22 for filming. If that would be a possibility for me to
23 be able to gather those who are interested in filming
24 on BLM lands and have some input on what can be done
25 to help the BLM or to advise in that aspect.

1 MR. MITCHELL: I wouldn't mind being on
2 that.

3 MANAGER ARCHULETA: I'm going to jump
4 in here real quick. And that's a good segue there,
5 Dan, for what I was thinking. One thing I had hoped
6 to do was to look through the files and kind of see
7 what had been done in the past to organize subgroups.
8 But we moved our office. Everything is in boxes. So
9 I didn't make it that far.

10 So what I'd like to do is to work with
11 Michelle and Randy and look for that documentation and
12 then put something together that we just send out via
13 e-mail that kind of lays out the process for setting
14 up a subgroup and what that would entail and
15 membership and that kind of thing. Does that make
16 sense, Randy?

17 CHAIR BANIS: It's a care and feeding
18 document.

19 MANAGER ARCHULETA: Okay.

20 MR. HOLLIDAY: And while we're on the
21 subgroup deal there, is there something to get the
22 current ones, at least the Dumont and the ISDRA
23 subgroups back working? Because I know we haven't
24 been able to work because we haven't had approval from
25 the DAC. And we'd like to get approval from the DAC

1 members so that we can continue on with what we need
2 to do, especially as the desert seasons are coming up
3 here in September and October or October and November
4 anyway. The desert seasons start having more
5 visitors.

6 MANAGER ARCHULETA: Randy, I'm going to
7 default to you a bit here. What was the process for
8 enabling those subgroups?

9 CHAIR BANIS: The subgroup members had
10 terms. They were fixed terms. They were usually
11 three-year terms. They were staggered. And not to
12 want to delivery any bad news, but I would only guess
13 that all of our terms have expired at this point.
14 What would normally happen is a Field Manager who is
15 assigned to that advisory council would work with the
16 Desert District to put out a news release calling for
17 nominations with a deadline.

18 There was an application form that was
19 downloaded from the website. And the applications
20 went to the Desert District to be collected, and I
21 think there was a small amount of vetting at the local
22 level. And then those candidates that qualified were
23 sent over to the Chair who presented them to the full
24 DAC. And the DAC made the actual appointments. The
25 Chairman of the DAC appoints the Chair of each

1 subgroup.

2 It doesn't have to be the Desert
3 Advisory Council member, but often it is because they
4 provide the nexus. And then from there most of the
5 time meetings were noticed through news releases, but
6 in the most recent years, Katrina I remember had to
7 put these Dumont Dunes meetings into the federal
8 register for a while at the end of the Obama
9 administration.

10 MR. HOLLIDAY: I know that as far as
11 Imperial Sand Dunes, they called for members here
12 about two years ago. And I put my application in, and
13 it went into the BLM. So there's probably some
14 applications sitting around there on somebody's desk
15 or on file.

16 MANAGER ARCHULETA: So give us a little
17 bit of time there, Dick, and we'll see what we have on
18 hand there. I know there's a lot coming up but let us
19 get those boxes unpacked and see what we have in place
20 already so we're not reinventing the wheel too much.

21 So if you recall those couple of
22 criteria that I covered, as long as the subgroup
23 operates under the umbrella of the DAC, we don't have
24 to publish in the federal register and we don't have
25 to publish even notes from the meetings. I mean

1 that's always a good idea to keep those, but we do
2 have a lot of flexibility. That's what I'm trying to
3 say there. And so Randy, we'll work on something to
4 put out to the rest of the DAC members to take a look
5 at and agree on a process there.

6 CHAIR BANIS: Sounds terrific. Any
7 last comments on this item?

8 MS. VAN DER LINDEN: Mr. Banis, I see
9 that Mr. Mitchell still has his hand up. I'm not sure
10 if he has a question or not.

11 MR. MITCHELL: Oh I didn't get the
12 arrow off here. Sorry about that.

13 CHAIR BANIS: Terrific. Thank you.
14 Andrew, I think the next item we call upon the
15 Associate District Manager, Greg Miller to update us
16 on DRECP implementation. Am I on the same train? Are
17 we all on the same train here? Good. Hi Greg. How
18 are you? Good to see you again.

19 MR. MILLER: Good to see you, too
20 Randy. Thank you. Yes, it's good to be seen as well.
21 Like everyone has expressed, hopefully in person real
22 soon. Yeah so again my name is Greg Miller. I am the
23 Associate District Manager for the California Desert
24 District here in the newly established office at Palm
25 Springs. We moved from Moreno Valley just recently.

1 And I'm here to talk about the
2 implementation for the DRECP 4. For those of you who
3 are not familiar with the DRECP, the Desert Renewable
4 Energy Conservation Plan, this is a BLM plan that was
5 put together, it started out as a multiagency plan in
6 2008 with CDF&W, the California Energy Commission, the
7 Fish and Wildlife Service, and BLM to put together a
8 plan that covers 22.5 million acres of land in
9 southern California in the desert and to talk about
10 where to place renewable energy projects as well as
11 conservation areas.

12 And I'm going to share my screen, and
13 we'll get to this. All right, so Randy if you can see
14 that let me know and I'll start.

15 CHAIR BANIS: It looks terrific. Thank
16 you.

17 MR. MILLER: All right. Well like I
18 said the Desert Renewable Energy Conservation Plan or
19 DRECP was EIS and Record of Decision was completed in
20 September of 2016. So we're coming up on a five-year
21 anniversary for that. And during that time we've had
22 some accomplishments associated with that as well as
23 what the implementation plan was moving forward.
24 We're going to be talking about that now.

25 So the planning area for the DRECP like

1 I said covered 22.5 million acres in southern
2 California. You can see the dark outline here is the
3 California Desert Conservation area. And then the
4 dashed outline is the DRECP area. There are some
5 areas that include a finger up towards Owens Lake in
6 Bishop Field Office and then some lands that are in
7 the Bakersfield Field Office as well, so we
8 incorporated a bit of central California desert on
9 this as well.

10 There are two main goals for the DRECP,
11 overarching goals. One was renewable energy. And the
12 idea was to provide a streamlined process for
13 renewable energy transmission and generation in the
14 desert. And the other goal was conservation. And the
15 idea here was to provide for long-term conservation
16 and management of special status species and long-term
17 protection of physical, cultural, scenic, and social
18 resources.

19 So in order to address some of that
20 basic background for the DRECP is that the BLM
21 established a little over 400,000 acres of what's
22 called Development Focus Areas where the renewable
23 energy transmission and generation projects would be
24 focused. These red areas here identify areas that are
25 set aside or designated for specific renewal energy

1 type of projects, whether it be geothermal, solar,
2 wind, or combinations thereof.

3 And then on the conservation side, the
4 BLM designated about 3.9 million acres of what's
5 called California Desert National Conservation Lands.
6 And those overlap with some areas of critical
7 environmental concern and some other issues below.
8 And then on top of that, the map doesn't just include
9 all the wilderness areas that we have out there as
10 well.

11 So that gives you an idea of what the
12 two major goals, the land designations are for the
13 DRECP: Conservation and the renewable energy side of
14 things. So some of the accomplishments that happened
15 over the course of the last five years is the National
16 Historic Preservation Act, Section 106 Programmatic
17 Agreement came together. Just recently we had another
18 meeting with the consulting parties on that just to
19 reinvigorate that and kickstart it again.

20 We're still continuing to work on two
21 DRECP-wide Conservation Management Actions, or CMAs.
22 One is the Compensatory Mitigation Process for
23 indirect and communal impacts of the projects in the
24 PA. And another is Cultural Resources Sensitivity
25 Analysis, for our early-design phase resource

1 avoidance. And we're still working on those with
2 consulting parties doing another round of work in the
3 PA. The Programmatic Agreement is being revisited
4 again, and we're looking at if the tribes and the
5 other consulting parties are moving forward then.

6 Another accomplishment we had during
7 the five years was to have an MOU with the REAT
8 agencies, the Renewable Energy Action Team. Those are
9 BLM, Fish and Wildlife Service, CDF&W, and Energy
10 Commission, of course. And we developed that as an
11 energy plan with the REAT team. It's identified to
12 advance federal and state natural resource
13 conservation goals by also meeting requirements of the
14 ESA, the California ESA, National Conservation
15 Community Plan Act, and also, I can't remember what
16 the CCP is. I'm sorry. And also facilitate timely
17 and streamlining permitting for renewable energy.

18 Also we came together to work on a
19 durability agreement which we are still working on
20 with BLM and CDF&W. The objective is to provide a
21 long-term durable conservation on public lands for
22 mitigation required by CDF&W. And that's in lieu of
23 requiring an acquisition, which as you all know erodes
24 the tax base --

25 And we're initiating a pilot project.

1 Actually we're working on one right now. Hopefully
2 that will work out to do well for us. Another
3 accomplishment, I'm sorry I went through that real
4 quick, another accomplishment is BLM is currently
5 working on forming a project management and support
6 team. And it's a 15-person team with five project
7 managers identified to work specifically on helping to
8 streamline compliance and approval processes for
9 renewable energy projects. And that's being
10 supervised by Brandon Anderson at the District Office.
11 And he has got a great team that he's building. And
12 we hope to start working on getting that team put
13 together and their concentration will be on the
14 specific projects identified across the district.

15 Another accomplishment that happened
16 just recently really is Interim Right-of-Way Rent
17 Policy. The 2016 regulation amendment caused the
18 increase in rental rates in several California
19 counties. So California took the lead in developing
20 an Interim Right-of-Way Policy for solar and wind
21 rental reduction requests. We recently came out with
22 a proposed -- and I don't know if it's final yet;
23 Andrew, maybe you can help me with that, proposed
24 rental policy for California that actually reduced the
25 rent that was brought together by the 2016 regulation.

1 MANAGER ARCHULETA: Not totally
2 complete. Still working on it, but we're getting
3 there.

4 MR. MILLER: Yes, so we're close to
5 doing it. And then another accomplishment we have was
6 mapping for the disturbance caps. Now all of the AC
7 agencies that is of critical environmental concern and
8 the California Desert National Conservation Lands have
9 disturbance caps associated with them.

10 So it's a percentage of disturbance
11 that can be allowed within a certain area, and they
12 have assigned disturbance caps. So what we do is we
13 look at the allowable versus the existing disturbance,
14 and then that's calculated. So if the cap has not
15 been met, then a potential proposed project that
16 disturbs some areas in there can be done or can move
17 forward as long as it doesn't go above that cap of
18 disturbance.

19 We've already had the baseline for all
20 of these areas mapped, which is a large
21 accomplishment. And that was really a good step
22 forward for us. So now we have all that and all of
23 the information has been uploaded into the USGS
24 Service Disturbance Analysis and Reclamation and
25 Tracking Tool, or SDARTT so that the team of BLM folks

1 can use that tool to help determine what the
2 disturbance cap is and how much disturbance would
3 occur over the cap should a proposed project move
4 forward.

5 So the other thing we've accomplished
6 and going to accomplish is the CMAs, or the
7 Conservation Management Actions. We have developed
8 several guidance documents for implementation of those
9 CMAs. We have and we're currently training all of the
10 new employees on those implementation, the
11 understanding, the guidance associated with the CMAs.
12 We're continuing to evaluate and refine and
13 incorporate lessons learned associated with CMAs,
14 especially when moving forward with some overlapping
15 designations that require that we look at different
16 CMAs that might be in conflict and how we move forward
17 with those.

18 And then one of the things we're
19 working on now is we've contracted an experienced
20 program worker. Many of you know him. We just
21 contracted him, Russell Scofield, who is back from
22 retirement helping us out to do a plan consolidation
23 and working with hundreds of the prior CBCA plan
24 amendments.

25 Which, what the DRECP was was a plan

1 amendment to the CBCA, our latest land use plan is
2 what we would be using. And trying to consolidate
3 them all down into one single plan so that when the
4 public goes to look or the BLM goes to look at a
5 document to see what the guidance is for a specific
6 piece of land for BLM in the California Desert
7 District, including Bakersfield and Bishop, they'll
8 have one spot to look. And that's all I have, so if
9 there are any questions, I'll be willing to take
10 those.

11 MS. POWELL: So I have a question.
12 This is Jayne. What is your timeline for completing
13 the consolidated documents? That's a great idea to
14 have everything put in one document, but how long will
15 it take?

16 MR. MILLER: So I've got a good start
17 on that, a very good start moving forward. We are
18 close. I would say we're, you know, in the 60, 70
19 percent range of getting it completed. So with
20 Russell on board and working with a contractor, we're
21 hoping to get that done within a year. Maybe a little
22 bit more, 18 months at the most I believe. So I'm
23 hoping that that won't take that long, but that's what
24 our goal is.

25 MS. POWELL: Thank you.

1 CHAIR BANIS: All right. We get to see
2 the DRECP implementation in action with the West
3 Mojave Route Network Designation Plan. That was one
4 of the first or maybe the first big designation plan
5 to occur in the district to fall under those
6 sideboards. It was kind of like the same.

7 It was like the planning process
8 before, just a little different sideboards. It didn't
9 change really that much. I think probably the BLM
10 line staff that was working on a route-by-route
11 analysis probably found those DRECP sideboards such as
12 disturbance caps and such more hand tying to the
13 options that they had on the table for designing a
14 route network than the public saw. But that's my
15 observations.

16 MS. POWELL: I have another question.
17 In terms of the Salton Sea and the BLM's involvement
18 with that as well as the proposed new lithium
19 production facilities that have been in the news down
20 there, I was wondering if there had been meetings with
21 the project proponents on that and what the status
22 was.

23 MANAGER ARCHULETA: Greg, do you want
24 me to cover that?

25 MR. MILLER: I was going to jump in.

1 You can go ahead, Andrew. Please.

2 MANAGER ARCHULETA: So, you know, the
3 area around the Salton Sea is a very checkerboarded
4 ownership, and so the BLM ownership is very spread out
5 and very checkerboarded. It actually falls within
6 both the Palm Springs South Coast Field Office and
7 within the El Centro Field Office. So we have been in
8 discussions with the Corps of Engineers about their
9 projects. We designated the El Centro Field Office as
10 the lead for the Desert District. I'm going to
11 actually turn it over to Ryan. Do you want to respond
12 to that question, Ryan?

13 MR. CHATTERTON: Yeah, and I believe
14 that was Jayne that asked it. Could you ask it one
15 more time just so I make sure I hear it completely?

16 MS. POWELL: Sure, Ryan. So with the
17 Salton Sea being front in a lot of people with the
18 southern California areas, mined in the desert area,
19 and the lithium development that is being proposed
20 that has been in the news lately, and the
21 opportunities for jobs and funding and everything
22 coming into the area, I was interested in what the
23 BLM's role in all of that was going to be and if the
24 project proponents and staff had any conversations yet
25 about it.

1 MR. CHATTERTON: Sure. Thank you. So
2 a lot of the proposals that you've seen in the news
3 recently associated with the lithium development and
4 that are actually all proposed to take place on
5 private lands. And so the BLM currently has not had
6 any conversations or interactions with the companies
7 that are out there proposing to look into that
8 extraction methodology associated with it. We do have
9 companies that are interested in geothermal resources
10 out there, especially in an area known as Truckhaven.
11 Recently in this last year we worked with Ormat to
12 complete some seismic -- studies in the Truckhaven
13 area.

14 And they also do have a proposal to do
15 up to, I want to say six exploratory wells to better
16 understand the resources that are available out there
17 in the geothermal resource area. This was actually
18 going to be a part of my Field Office update as well,
19 but that's currently the interest that we have right
20 now in the Salton Sea.

21 MR. MILLER: I might add that the BLM
22 is meeting with federal partners along with the Corps
23 of Engineers and some other federal partners on a
24 regular basis to discuss processes and projects that
25 are happening out there. Fish and Wildlife Service is

1 one of them. NRCS I think is another.

2 MR. CHATTERTON: And the Bureau of
3 Reclamation is the lead agency associated with that
4 federal partners group. And we do meet with them on a
5 regular basis.

6 MR. MITCHELL: I have a question. That
7 DRECP I've heard nothing mentioned about the ranching
8 industry. I mean who is representing that and how are
9 they bringing that into all these other plans?

10 MR. MILLER: That's a good -- I'm
11 sorry, Billy. Go ahead.

12 MR. MITCHELL: No, I don't care who
13 answers it, I'm just ...

14 MR. MILLER: Okay.

15 MR. MITCHELL: Go right ahead.

16 MR. MILLER: So that's a good question,
17 though. It really is. There is a component in the
18 DRECP associated with grazing, and so it's a lot of it
19 has to do with some of the underlying also
20 designations associated across -- there's levels and
21 levels of designations on each of these lands out
22 there that we have to look at when we start looking at
23 different projects associated in different areas.

24 And I know this is not a very good
25 answer, but it's one of those things that it's a case-

1 by-case basis on how things come about. And hopefully
2 with some better minds than myself, these things can
3 be answered when the time comes on some projects that
4 happen across the desert. I don't know if that was a
5 good enough answer for you, Billy. I'm sorry.

6 MR. MITCHELL: You know, we went back,
7 I think it was five -- this is my second term on the
8 DAC. It's been probably about five or six years ago,
9 we do have a law passed by Feinstein and Lewis about
10 the whole Mojave Desert, the last six ranchers in it.
11 Are you guys going to keep that in mind as you're
12 doing these projects or mitigation or whatever you're
13 going to do? Because they want to put everything on
14 federal land, and most of the federal land right now
15 in Mojave Desert is ranching, what's left you know.

16 So I mean where are they going to get
17 mitigation, where are they going to do all this? I
18 would like if somebody would be able to keep up on it
19 and have it mentioned as you guys do these meetings
20 and stuff, you know. I mean there's not a place
21 you're going to go that's not going to affect, I don't
22 think, and I could be wrong, a ranching family. It's
23 been my generation, I'm four. The rest of them are
24 younger than me.

25 And I'm kind of the old man now that

1 has to ask questions and do this kind of stuff. So it
2 wasn't really a good enough answer, but I'll accept
3 it. I don't have a choice. I just want you to keep
4 in mind, you know, what's going on there and how many
5 generations that it's been there and what they're
6 going to have to be required by that law to do as I
7 relocate the people eventually. So as long as you've
8 got that in mind, I'll be perfectly happy. Thank you.

9 MR. MILLER: Thank you, Billy. And
10 again I apologize for the non-answer answer. It's
11 something I'm still looking into, right? And we'll
12 still look into. But most of the -- I do understand
13 where you're coming from, and I can guarantee that we
14 will always look at what's happening on everything out
15 there. That what's there now, what's proposed and
16 what they restrictions are, we know that there's no
17 development focus areas on grazing areas in Barstow,
18 so that's a start.

19 MR. MITCHELL: Okay.

20 MR. MILLER: And there's no grazing in
21 El Centro from what I understand. So there's plenty
22 of areas that we know that -- Needles, there's no
23 development focus area on the grazing area in Needles
24 as well. And this is coming from the Field Managers
25 that are helping me out as we're moving forward

1 through this. So yes, a lot of those development
2 focus areas that you saw on that map, many of those
3 are outside of grazing areas or they were considered
4 during the implementation of the areas near the
5 proposal.

6 MR. MITCHELL: Yeah.

7 MR. MILLER: So if -- we wanted to make
8 sure that we weren't putting those development focus
9 areas in areas that were being used regularly by
10 another resource of some sort, whether it be --

11 MR. MITCHELL: You know what, I
12 probably should save the question I guess for the area
13 managers, but so I don't forget it because I'm 73
14 years old and it's about nap time. But anyway on all
15 these kiosks that you got out here, I guess that's the
16 right thing you call them, you know it states when
17 they go in like say into Rattlesnake Canyon, there's
18 nothing mentioned on that about the industry that's
19 affected while you're going on that kiosk.

20 And I think it's about time that they
21 mention that so that when the people go there, fix
22 cattle guards and just clean their tires off, you
23 know. I talked to Katrina about it on the county
24 side. I don't know how we get it done or what, but I
25 would appreciate it. And the other six families would

1 appreciate just the industry being mentioned through
2 that area, you know. And that's all.

3 MR. MILLER: Well thank you. And I
4 think we have plans to do that, Billy. On the new
5 kiosks we'll have grazing allotments and a message
6 associated with it.

7 MR. MITCHELL: Oh, great. Thank you
8 very much. I appreciate it. I know the other
9 ranchers do, too. Thank you.

10 MS. VAN DER LINDEN: Greg, I believe
11 Mr. Martin has a question.

12 MR. MILLER: Mr. Martin.

13 MR. MARTIN: Yes, Greg. Thank you for
14 your summary on the DRECP implementation. I just have
15 one comment on the capping of the land. That affects
16 non-renewable resources dramatically in many areas in
17 California. I know personally of several mining
18 operations that will not proceed any further with this
19 type of capping because what happens is these valid
20 unpatented mining claims really become worthless
21 because of the small amount of land that would be
22 available to mine minerals such as iron, gypsum,
23 pozzolan, and several others. So I believe that the
24 regulations for capping for renewable energy affects
25 non-renewable energy. And I believe that needs to be

1 looked into.

2 MR. MILLER: And that's a good point,
3 Mr. Martin. And I failed to mention, I could have
4 gone into it more, but for our processes in place to
5 mitigate additional disturbances should that happen in
6 some areas, right? And I'm not sure, I'd have to look
7 at it again, but also there's probably some sort of a
8 -- for any existing right-of-way or existing mining
9 claim that's already been identified, those were
10 already part of the base disturbance.

11 So if I remember right, even if there
12 was no ground disturbance associated with the right-
13 of-way in there, that was already identified as
14 disturbance. So if the individual or the permittee
15 was within that right-of-way or grant area that they
16 had given, they could still assume and resume their
17 operations so long as they didn't go outside of their
18 permit area. And I believe that's right. Amy, if you
19 wouldn't mind, just speaking up real quick and
20 mentioning yes or no on that, I would appreciate that.

21 MS. FESNOCK: I believe you are correct
22 as far as all existing right-of-ways were captured on
23 their outside boundary and incorporated into the
24 disturbance cap because if a right-of-way had already
25 been issued or a mining claim had already been agreed

1 upon, we knew that that work was going to be happening
2 under an existing right. And therefore we captured it
3 as if it had already happened to make sure that we
4 weren't granting somebody new disturbance when we
5 needed to make sure what we had already granted was
6 appropriately accounted.

7 MR. MILLER: Perfect. Thank you, Amy.
8 That's exactly what I was trying to say. Mr. Martin?

9 MR. MARTIN: Well I'm talking about
10 unpatented mineral claims that now become -- you know
11 they're no longer basically mineable because of the
12 cap. So I don't believe those areas were excluded
13 from the capping area. That would be a lot of work to
14 research the valid unpatented and patented mineral and
15 millsite claims within the cap areas. So I don't
16 think that's been done by the BLM. And like I
17 mentioned those valid claims really lose their value
18 because of the very limited amount of area that would
19 become available for potential exploitation of those
20 non-renewable resources. Thanks.

21 MR. MILLER: Thank you for your
22 concern. You know and like I mentioned before many of
23 this is a lessons learned for the DRECP. And so we're
24 still having some growing pains here and there and
25 working through the process. And like I said I'm

1 hoping that I can hire some people who have better
2 minds than I to be able to figure this out and tell me
3 and Andrew what to do.

4 MR. MARTIN: Thank you very much, Greg.

5 MR. MITCHELL: Greg, now all of these
6 mining -- don't they have to have a reclamation plan
7 with you and through the county and show validity to
8 advance? I mean if it's really valid and they come to
9 cap and then need more, isn't there a way they can do
10 that and then rehab the land behind it?

11 MR. MILLER: Yes, and we follow the
12 3809 regs, the mining law regs. A lot of this
13 happens. And so there's plenty of that -- validity
14 exams and also reclamation plans are going to allow
15 this. Yeah, there's a lot of behind-the-scenes work
16 that happens before anything is authorized.

17 MR. MITCHELL: Yeah, and it doesn't
18 matter even how small it is. The validity and the
19 replication -- a plan to rehab that through the
20 county.

21 MR. MILLER: Correct.

22 MR. MITCHELL: All right. Thank you.

23 MR. MILLER: Yep.

24 CHAIR BANIS: So I just wanted to, if I
25 could, restate an exchange between you, Greg, and

1 Billy that for potential conflicts or for conflicts
2 between designations within the DRECP, we really won't
3 know how things will turn out until a proposed action
4 comes to a neighborhood near you essentially unless
5 it's been done similarly somewhere else within the
6 plan.

7 So I think what you're saying at this
8 time, the DFAs are places where there are no grazing
9 areas are what we're currently seeing for proposed
10 sites, and until we see a proposed site outside a DFA
11 onto one of those lands that has so many different
12 overlapping colors and shapes and polygons, we really
13 won't know how that turns out until we have some
14 examples.

15 And I'm sorry to go back to routes
16 again, that was a big question with recreation: How
17 will this affect recreation? We didn't really know
18 until a proposed action came to our neighborhood and
19 we saw it work out.

20 MR. MITCHELL: Exactly.

21 CHAIR BANIS: It's interesting. I just
22 want to state that and make sure folks understand
23 that, that it's an interesting part of the
24 implementation.

25 MR. MILLER: It is. Thank you, Randy.

1 MR. MITCHELL: Thank you.

2 CHAIR BANIS: The floor is still open.
3 We're just a little bit ahead of time, but that has
4 not stopped us from sticking with our agenda. The
5 times on the side are goals for us to achieve for the
6 day, but we're not going to dilly dally. If there's
7 no objections, thanks Greg for your presentation. And
8 if there's no further questions, let's move into our
9 15-minute morning break. That will put us back --
10 let's pretend it's 10:30. That will put us back at
11 10:45. So we're 15 minutes ahead of schedule. Let's
12 look at it that way. So I'll see you back at 10:45.
13 No objections?

14 MR. MITCHELL: No objections.

15 CHAIR BANIS: Great. Thank you,
16 everybody. Terrific morning so far.

17 MR. MITCHELL: Yeah, very good.

18 (Off the record.)

19 CHAIR BANIS: Well if there's no
20 objections, I'd like to call the meeting back to order
21 at approximately 10:50 a.m. And the first item on our
22 agenda after the break is an update on the tortoise
23 recovery from Amy Fesnock. And she's onscreen and I
24 think you're ready to go, aren't you Amy? I see
25 you're still muted.

1 MS. FESNOCK: Yes, I am ready to go.

2 CHAIR BANIS: Got you now. Thank you.
3 The floor is yours and the screen.

4 MS. FESNOCK: Okay. Hi, I am Amy
5 Fesnock. I am the Resource Advisor for the California
6 Desert District. I am new to CDD. I joined the
7 district in July, so I have been here approximately a
8 month. Prior to starting with CDD, I worked for
9 California BLM in the State Office as the Wildlife
10 Enlisted Species Lead for 13 years. Today I will be
11 giving you an update on the status of the desert
12 tortoise.

13 Since its inception, the protection of
14 the desert tortoise has been and continues to be a
15 primary goal of the California Desert Conservation
16 area and its Range Use Plans and Range Use Plan
17 Amendments. Of the approximate ten million acres
18 administered by BLM within the Desert District, over
19 three million acres are designated as ACECs, or Areas
20 of Critical Environmental Concern specifically for
21 tortoise conservation. Additionally BLM has
22 designated desert tortoise linkages to ensure and
23 provide for long-term genetic exchange between the
24 tortoise ACECs and conservation areas.

25 Here we can see the Tortoise

1 Conservation Network within CDD. The ACECs for
2 tortoises are identified in the darker medium brown
3 color, and the tortoise linkages are identified in the
4 lighter tan color. Conservation in CDD is achieved
5 through the various Land Use Plan Decisions and
6 Conservation and Management Actions. These include
7 such things as restricting travel to designated
8 routes outside of open OHV areas, designating certain
9 critical washes as closed zones for recreation,
10 acquiring, or being accepting donations of private
11 lands.

12 As we discussed in Greg's presentation,
13 there are surface disturbance caps identified in
14 conservation areas and ACECs. Those help manage the
15 amount of disturbance that goes on in those
16 conservation areas. If disturbance does occur within
17 a conservation area specific to tortoise, there is a
18 5:1 mitigation ratio to offset that impact. So for
19 every one acre that would be impacted, there needs to
20 be five acres of good stuff done. That mitigation
21 ratio is then applied to either habitat restoration
22 and enhancement or acquisition.

23 Additionally we do have identified
24 raven monitoring and control within the CDCA and that
25 is proving to be critical for protecting tortoises

1 over the long term. So as we discussed earlier under
2 Greg's DRECP presentation, under CDCA originally the
3 disturbance cap within tortoise ACECs was 1 percent.

4 The Desert Renewable Energy
5 Conservation Plan Range Use Plan Amendment reduced
6 that disturbance cap to 0.5 percent and in some
7 critical areas even lower than 0.5 percent. The
8 reason for that lowering of disturbance cap is since
9 the creation of CDCA in 1980 and the listing of the
10 tortoise and tortoise critical habitat in the early
11 1990s, the desert tortoise continues to decline.

12 Tortoise ACECs all have a solar energy
13 exclusion, so they're not allowed to develop in our
14 conservation areas. There are no new roads to be
15 authorized within ACECs. Transmission lines that need
16 to cross our ACECs must go into existing utility
17 corridors.

18 As Greg talked about in his DRECP
19 presentation, we have implemented the SDARTT, our
20 Surface Disturbance and Reclamation Tracking Tool.
21 That allows us to track new disturbance as it is
22 authorized as well as when we implement restoration
23 and reclaim habitat back to being natural and useable
24 by desert wildlife and plants. We have the ability of
25 tracking that and putting those recovered acres back

1 into our calculations.

2 The disturbance within ACECs as I
3 mentioned in the previous slide is that 5:1 ratio
4 which can be done through acquisition, restoration, or
5 a combination of the two. As I mentioned, desert
6 tortoise continue to decline. The U.S. Fish and
7 Wildlife Service using the Line Distance Sampling Data
8 that has been collected since 2004 pulled together a
9 report and a publication that indicates we have lost
10 37 percent of the tortoises between 2004 and 2014
11 across the range.

12 And within the West Mojave Region
13 Recovery Unit, there has been a 49 percent loss of
14 tortoises. They are looking at doing a repeat of that
15 analysis, you know because we're now several years
16 down. 2021, right, seven more years. In the annual
17 reports that we're getting back from Line Distance
18 Sampling we are continuing to see declines in
19 tortoises, and we anticipate an updated larger
20 regional scale report from Fish and Wildlife Service
21 in the next couple of years.

22 These steep declines could be
23 sustainable if juvenile numbers in those monitorings
24 were increasing, but they're not. So the other
25 concern besides the fact that we are losing or have

1 lost large numbers of tortoises is that when we are
2 looking at the numbers of juveniles that are out there
3 on the landscape, we are also seeing a decrease in the
4 percent of juveniles in a given population.

5 And that means we are not growing the
6 tortoises that we need to replace the adults, which is
7 unfortunately setting us up into what appears to be
8 kind of a positive feedback loop in that once we're in
9 a bad place, we continue to be in a bad place.
10 Reasons for these declines seem to be attributed to
11 drought, primarily long-term drought; some vehicle
12 strike issues that we're having; and then predation,
13 which we will talk about.

14 So impacts of prolonged drought.
15 Desert tortoise females have an amazing ability within
16 their body to hold reserves. So if we have a good wet
17 year and they get out and get lots of forage and lots
18 of water in their body, they have the ability of
19 holding those reserves and if you end up with
20 relatively short drought periods, you know one or two
21 or maybe even three years, their body has the ability
22 to continue to produce eggs and lay clutches of eggs
23 to then be able to have juveniles out there to respond
24 should the drought come to an end and resources be
25 available again.

1 Once you get past the two or three- or
2 four-year timeframe, the reserves within the females'
3 bodies are no longer there, and they either stop
4 producing eggs altogether or they reduce the number of
5 eggs. So after a good set of rain years female
6 tortoises will produce two, maybe even three clutches
7 of eggs that are five or six eggs in each clutch.

8 When you're looking at times of reduced
9 body reserves, instead of having two or three clutches
10 of eggs, you'll see only one clutch of eggs. And
11 instead of it being six to nine sometimes, you're now
12 looking at three or four or five. So we're seeing an
13 overall reduced ability or reduced number of eggs that
14 are being produced across the range.

15 In addition, that lack of forage and
16 decreased water ends up affecting the ability of the
17 juveniles to make it through that first winter. So
18 when a juvenile hatches out of its egg, it has a
19 little bit of the yolk sac still left inside its
20 abdomen and it needs to be able to run around and find
21 tasty herbs and desert natural flora to put more
22 energy into its body and more moisture from that
23 vegetation in order to make it through the first
24 hibernation, that first winter.

25 With prolonged droughts, juvenile

1 tortoises end up having higher mortality rates due to
2 the lack of ability of building up those body
3 reserves. In addition the other risk that ends up
4 happening is that you get an increase of predation by
5 coyotes, badgers, and ravens during drought periods.
6 So in a good rain year, there will be prolific mice,
7 kangaroo rats, brush rabbits, and jackrabbits out on
8 the landscape. And coyotes do a great job eating
9 those. All of those rodents and rabbit populations
10 respond rapidly to changing vegetation conditions, so
11 during prolonged droughts, those populations collapse.
12 And with them no longer being across the landscape,
13 coyotes then switch to eating tortoises in order for
14 them to continue to survive.

15 So it ends up kind of being this kind
16 of whirlwind of adults become less and less fit and
17 have less and less ability to produce young; the young
18 themselves have less and less ability to make it
19 through that first winter; and then you have increased
20 predation related to prey switching of our primary
21 predators.

22 We are seeing losses of adult tortoises
23 related to county roads, highways, and interstates.
24 This loss of adults is actually looking to be a
25 primary factor in moving the tortoise towards

1 extinction and preventing recovery of tortoise
2 populations.

3 Over the last several years, BLM has
4 funded a variety of research to help us understand
5 what's going on with tortoises in the desert and help
6 us understand what actions we could be taking to
7 offset those kinds of impacts that are going on.

8 One of the studies that we did assist
9 in funding is this Peaden, et al. from 2015. And they
10 went out and looked at tortoise and tortoise signs
11 adjacent to county roads and interstates. And what
12 they found is for a county road, if you look at this
13 spot right here and drop it down, that's about 200
14 meters. So within 200 meters of a county road, there
15 is virtually no sign of tortoises along that section
16 immediately adjacent to the road.

17 And if you look at interstates like I-
18 10, that road effect goes all the way out to about 500
19 meters. So what that ends up meaning is should a
20 tortoise move into that area next to the road, at some
21 point in its life it's going to end up crossing that
22 road and being taken out by a vehicle.

23 So there were a lot of people that
24 questioned whether vehicle strikes really was what was
25 causing that devoid zone adjacent to the roads. There

1 were several questions that were raised about, you
2 know, could it be chemicals? Could it be vibration?
3 Could it be noise? Could there be something that is
4 preventing tortoises from moving into those areas?

5 We've done a variety of research and
6 investigations into all those other causes, and those
7 other causes are not showing to be the driving factor.
8 It appears to actually be vehicles and vehicle
9 strikes. So if you're thinking about the West Mojave
10 and you're thinking about losses to vehicles or
11 vehicle strikes and you're thinking about the numbers
12 of routes that are out there, you can see how we end
13 up with this kind of compounding risk for a tortoise
14 in that landscape.

15 If we zoom in, for those of you that
16 know the desert, this is Kramer Junction, right? So
17 if we zoom into this area and we put a buffer around
18 existing routes of the area that we would anticipate
19 to be risky for a tortoise to live, you can see that
20 we end up losing a lot of habitat as being good for
21 supporting robust populations of tortoises.

22 And that's part of what is, you know,
23 critical in the route restoration work that's going on
24 in Ridgecrest and Barstow is to be able to reclaim
25 these areas. If we remove the unauthorized routes

1 from access, not only are we recapturing the actual
2 route that's being restored, we're also gaining
3 habitat and creating safer habitat adjacent. We're
4 reclaiming those buffered lands.

5 So one of the questions that has come
6 to us, right? If we look at desert tortoise fencing,
7 it can be quite expensive. I guess not "can be", it
8 is quite expensive. You're looking at 15,000 to
9 \$40,000 a mile depending upon the substrate that
10 you're building in. So we had a question, right?
11 It's like if we're looking at fencing all of our
12 highways, is this the proper use of those funds
13 because that's going to be expensive to do.

14 And one of the ways of testing that
15 without actually building a bunch of stuff out in the
16 desert is to work with models. So Dr. Todd at UC
17 Davis and a couple of his PhD students set up some
18 spatially explicit population models and ran literally
19 thousands and thousands of iterations of these models,
20 right?

21 So I'll be the first to tell you that
22 models are never accurate. They never exactly
23 represent what's going on in the real world, but they
24 are a good guess at what could be going on in the real
25 world. And the way that you improve their ability to

1 guess or to project out is by running literally
2 thousands and thousands of iterations of them.

3 So this graph shows the kind of result
4 of that, where over on this side we start populations
5 off, and we let them run without the effect of a
6 fence. And they're just kind of running for
7 approximately in this graph for 500 years showing how
8 populations naturally bounce up and down depending
9 upon a variety of other factors that are going on.

10 At the 500-year stamp, those models
11 then incorporated a new road into those populations.
12 And what you see is a consistent downward trend of all
13 of those populations with just the road being added.
14 And that is animals that are being lost over time to
15 vehicle strikes.

16 At this 50-year time stamp, they ran
17 models where they added a fence to stop tortoises from
18 having access to those interstates. One set of
19 populations they did not, and without a fence this
20 population continues to decline over time. This
21 population here, once you add the fence, you no longer
22 lose the adults. And you start to reclaim that
23 habitat. And you, over a 150-year timeframe, will see
24 approximately a 3 percent increase in that population
25 as it stabilizes and then begins to recover.

1 A 3 percent increase over 150 years is
2 a really slow recovery rate, so they decided to model
3 what would happen if we fenced and then added head-
4 started tortoises. So this line right here is adding
5 just 25 individuals for three years. The first three
6 years after the fence put in, you drop of 25 babies
7 for three years, so a total of 75 tortoises in that
8 new fenced area. And you see quite a descent response
9 to adding individuals into that landscape and
10 essentially head-starting or jumping into animals
11 being close to reproduction of age.

12 This top line actually kind of shows
13 what would happen if instead of adding 25 individuals
14 for three years, you added 50 individuals for three
15 years. And if you wanted to continue to do head-
16 starting and adding animals out, you would get a
17 faster and faster kind of recovery of those
18 populations.

19 So this modeling effort and a variety
20 of other things that are going on that I don't have
21 the time to cover everything that has been going on in
22 the research world, has led the Desert Tortoise
23 Recovery Office with Fish and Wildlife Service to come
24 out with a "we need to really start fencing highways."
25 And they have identified priority areas for tortoise

1 fencing based on the quality of adjacent habitat, the
2 density of tortoises in those zones, and then the
3 conservation status of BLM-administered plans.

4 Right now, so on this map the dark red
5 or burgundy color are roads that already exist. The
6 fuchsia pink are the priority areas that we would like
7 to fence going forward.

8 As part of the Ivanpah ISEGS Solar
9 Project, they were responsible for paying for this
10 section of fence here along the I-15 and the Ivanpah
11 Valley and then this section of fencing along I-40 at
12 the base of Mojave National Preserve. Both of those
13 fences were really complicated in actually getting
14 everybody on the same page and getting approval from
15 Caltrans to do that fencing effort.

16 So when Fish and Wildlife Service
17 approached the Desert Tortoise Management Oversight
18 Group with this idea of "we need to start prioritizing
19 desert tortoise fencing", it became really clear that
20 Fish and Wildlife Service, the California Department
21 of Fish and Game, Caltrans, and BLM need to put effort
22 in our four agencies working together in order to work
23 through that kind of tediousness and try to get a
24 streamlined ability of getting the work done.

25 We did have an opportunity that slipped

1 through our fingers. Arlington Solar Project was very
2 interested in constructing desert tortoise fence as
3 part of the mitigation for their solar project, but we
4 couldn't get all the agencies on the same page. We
5 are working really hard this year to try to avoid
6 that, so when new projects are being proposed, like
7 Arica Victory Pass in Oberon down along that I-10
8 corridor, we are very helpful that tortoise fencing
9 will be part of their compensation package.

10 Once you get fence in place, tortoise
11 numbers start to stabilize, and you get to reclaim
12 that habitat, that -- zone that had been identified in
13 that earlier study. And what we have found or what we
14 are calculating is that for every mile of fencing that
15 goes in place, you essentially regain 270 acres as
16 becoming low-risk or no-risk habitat for tortoises to
17 reoccupy when that's adjacent next to a primary
18 interstate. And along county roads that are fenced,
19 you would reclaim about 106 to 110 acres per mile of
20 fencing that you put in.

21 So moving onto the next threat that
22 we're actively managing, ravens in the desert. They
23 are at high levels, higher than what would be
24 considered normal. And that's causing a bunch of
25 problems for desert tortoise.

1 So the Raven Control Program that's
2 currently being implemented in CDD is funded by LUPA
3 Wide Raven Mitigation Fund. Each project that BLM
4 approves on BLM-administered lands pay a portion into
5 this fund. If there are projects that are on private
6 lands, counties should have the ability of including a
7 Raven Mitigation Fee as well and paying into the fund.
8 And then the California Department of Fish and
9 Wildlife, when they issue their incidental take
10 permits, they're including a Raven Mitigation Fee in
11 that associated with projects that are on private
12 lands.

13 So it's recognized as needing to be
14 assistance by all, right? And initially the Raven
15 Monitoring and Control was restricted to just removing
16 adults that were nesting, that were known or had been
17 proven to have depredated a tortoise. We then, after
18 showing that that wasn't sufficient for actually
19 protecting tortoises, we moved into kind of Phase 2,
20 where we were removing or controlling nests in
21 conservation areas.

22 And we are finding that the most cost-
23 effective way of managing these nests in natural areas
24 is a technique called egg oiling. And then when we
25 have known offending ravens, we are contracting with

1 Wildlife Services to remove those known offending
2 ravens. The way the program is managed is we hire
3 contract biologists that drive around all the open
4 routes of tortoise ACECs. They find as many active
5 nests as they possibly can. We then work on oiling
6 all of those nests that we have access to, and we are
7 gathering data on tortoise predation associated with
8 those nests.

9 So the initial oiling was all done by
10 hand so you could only have access to nests that were
11 relatively close to the ground, up to like 15 feet off
12 the ground. Through the Hardshell Labs Company, they
13 have actually developed an oiling system that can be
14 deployed on an unmanned aircraft or a drone. It then
15 as you can see here has a stream of oil that comes
16 down onto the eggs. From a raven's perspective, the
17 eggs look normal, and they continue to sit on that
18 nest trying to hatch those eggs out.

19 Once there's an oil sheen on the eggs,
20 the eggs no longer continue to develop and die. The
21 importance in keeping the adults still attending those
22 eggs is that if you completely destroyed and removed
23 this nest early in the breeding season, they would
24 actually build a second nest and lay a second clutch
25 of eggs. So this oil egging is significantly

1 dampening raven production in the desert.

2 So in 2019 we did our test case right
3 here in the Superior-Cronese ACEC and what we found is
4 that of the nests that were oiled, we had a 96 percent
5 effectiveness as far as they did not hatch. Because
6 of the success of this pilot year in 2019, in 2020, we
7 pushed that across all of the recovery units or
8 tortoise conservation areas except for Chuckwalla.
9 And Chuckwalla was not treated because of the
10 relatively low number of raven nests that had been
11 recorded in 2019.

12 In our 2020 year we across the range
13 had again this 96 percent effectiveness so we are
14 really actually kind of pleased with that. If we roll
15 into 2021, I was not able to get exact numbers of
16 treatment that was done. This is a pretty bad drought
17 year, so raven production is actually down across the
18 desert.

19 The estimate that we have from Fish and
20 Wildlife Service is that approximately 1,000 eggs were
21 oiled this year, and that most of those active raven
22 nests were in natural areas within a closer distance
23 of flying to cities that can act as subsidies and that
24 there were very few nests actually found out in the
25 natural areas. So we're trying to work on capturing

1 situations like this where we can take advantage of
2 reduced raven production to then knock the populations
3 even further back.

4 This question of how ravens are using
5 the desert? How much time do they spend in natural
6 areas? How much time do they spend in, you know,
7 urbanized areas? Do you have the urban raven that
8 only hangs out in cities? Do you have a natural raven
9 that only hangs out in natural areas? We couldn't
10 really answer that question based on the existing
11 science, so we hired a group of folks to do that kind
12 of habitat use study.

13 Developments in technology have allowed
14 us to put, right here you can see the transmitter,
15 that is a GSM transmitter. It essentially is a
16 satellite transmitter or GPS transmitter that talks to
17 cell towers. So you get a tremendous amount of
18 information coming in, and the unit continues to
19 record data when it's out and about. And then as soon
20 as the animal gets within range of a cell tower, it
21 then downloads all of the data for you.

22 So here are some examples of birds.
23 We're going to click through a couple of examples.
24 This was an adult female that was trapped. The red
25 dot equals where she was trapped. That's Desert Hot

1 Springs. The pink dots indicate all the places that
2 she has traveled in about the last six months. So you
3 can see that there's quite a range within the natural
4 area and quite a bit of use of that urban landscape in
5 the desert.

6 This red dot represents an immature
7 female raven that was trapped at Fort Irwin. Being
8 immature, she is not nesting. And you can see that
9 her travels, not being tied down to a nest, she has
10 quite the wanderlust, right, as she is moving about
11 the desert. Again you see lots of use of natural
12 areas and lots of use of developed zones.

13 Here we have an adult male that was
14 trapped in Fort Irwin. His activities again show use
15 of Barstow, Ridgecrest, California City, and a bunch
16 of natural areas. And his movements are relatively
17 restricted because he is also providing support for a
18 nest of chicks.

19 If I include all of our animals, this
20 is the kind of movement that we are seeing across the
21 desert. We currently have 32 animals that have tags
22 on them that are collecting information. We have 11
23 more transmitters to deploy. We will be working on
24 deploying them in this kind of zone because we
25 currently have very few animals out in that area, and

1 we want to see how they behave and whether there is a
2 difference in that kind of Eastern Mojave as compared
3 to Western Mojave.

4 What this work has demonstrated in just
5 the six or nine months that it's been going is that
6 there is no such thing as a natural area raven or a
7 city raven. The ravens are using this landscape
8 broadly. And that if we're thinking about managing
9 ravens in an attempt to protect tortoises, we really
10 do have to think about it regionally and not on these
11 tortoise conservation zones.

12 Additionally with ravens we are going
13 out and doing point counts to determine densities of
14 ravens seen in natural areas in our tortoise
15 conservation areas. So our low over here is 0.75
16 ravens per square kilometer. And then our high over
17 here in the Fremont-Kramer is 4.5 ravens per square
18 kilometer.

19 Where that becomes important is we have
20 been doing some tests with fake tortoises, little 3-D
21 models that look like tortoises out in the landscape.
22 And we're trying to determine how often those models
23 are then bothered by ravens. And what we see here in
24 this graph on the left is that if you are within 3.5
25 kilometers of a raven nest, you only have about a 30

1 percent chance in a given year of not being found and
2 eaten by a raven.

3 If we're over here on the graph on the
4 right, what this shows us is that when your raven
5 density gets to essentially two and a half ravens per
6 square kilometer, there are no juvenile tortoises that
7 are making it past nine years. They are all being
8 eaten.

9 And when you're down here at the kind
10 of 0.6, maybe less than 0.6 range of ravens per square
11 kilometer, at that point you have enough annual
12 survival of those small tortoises that you have a
13 chance of having those actually make it to
14 recruitment.

15 So if we go back to this slide, what
16 that then tells us in Fremont-Kramer, Superior-
17 Cronese, Ord-Rodman, Joshua Tree, Chuckwalla, every
18 baby tortoise that is produced in those tortoise
19 conservation areas are being gobbled up by ravens by
20 the time that they're nine years old. They're gone.
21 And that is really depressing and has left us going,
22 "Okay, where do we go from here? If we know that we
23 need to get baby tortoises on the ground in order to
24 recover the tortoise, where do we go from here?"

25 So what we're currently looking at, the

1 picture on the left shows two tortoises that are the
2 exact same age. These are both head-start tortoises.
3 The tortoise on the top was allowed to hibernate or
4 Brumate its first winter. The tortoise below was
5 kept inside in conditions that did not force it to go
6 into hibernation or Brumation. And it stayed awake
7 all winter and was able to eat food all winter and
8 drink water all winter and grow all winter.

9 What we're looking at, so then you kind
10 of see the lower picture, that black tortoise shell in
11 the center is a 3-D printed tortoise shell. And then
12 they get painted and all the other ones surrounding
13 that are the painted versions. Those are what we have
14 been putting out in the desert at various distances in
15 the different densities of ravens with cameras
16 watching them to see how often ravens come in and
17 bother them.

18 So what we're looking at right now are
19 studies that say how far away can we drop off head-
20 started tortoises and have them protected from
21 foraging by ravens? And is there a size? We're
22 trying different sizes of these 3-D models to see if
23 there is a size at which ravens are no longer
24 interested in trying to eat baby tortoises.

25 So as we pivot into this relatively

1 depressing talk that I have just given, what we come
2 away with is that if we're going to prevent the
3 continued decline and loss of tortoises across the
4 desert, we need to increase recovery efforts. We
5 desperately need to start fencing, implementing more
6 fencing, in order to reduce the loss of those adults.
7 And with the protection of those adults and then the
8 reclaiming of that habitat adjacent to those new
9 fences, we will get the fastest recovery if we also
10 augment with head-start tortoises, baby tortoises.

11 We need to continue our efforts in
12 controlling ravens to keep those raven densities in
13 our natural areas low. A critical part of this is
14 continuing to do the public outreach and education
15 that we have been working on for quite some time with
16 cities and counties and local residents about managing
17 subsidies, about preventing raven access to those.

18 We need to continue to expand our
19 habitat restoration of those unauthorized routes so we
20 can start reclaiming or making more of that habitat
21 safer for tortoises. Part of that is a continued
22 outreach and educational conversation with
23 recreationists about the importance of staying on the
24 right routes and not creating unauthorized routes.

25 And you know I think we're kind of at a

1 place where we need to make a pretty dramatic change
2 in the efforts that we're putting out there, or we're
3 going to lose our ability to effectively recover the
4 tortoise.

5 And I guess to be clear, when I think
6 about recovering the tortoise, I am not envisioning
7 high numbers of tortoises back at its full historic
8 range. I'm pretty pragmatic as far as, you know, a
9 recovered tortoise population are stable subsets
10 within what used to be the historic range. Because
11 right now, just about everything out there is in a
12 pretty serious decline. And with that, I will open
13 the floor to questions from the deck.

14 MR. ROBINSON: This is Bob Robinson.
15 I'm raising my hand. I'm on the phone.

16 CHAIR BANIS: Hi, Bob. You've got the
17 floor.

18 MR. ROBINSON: I have several things
19 about the tortoise issue. The first thing was about
20 the fencing, and it didn't say anything about
21 crossings. Tortoises are very much headstrong and
22 when they want to go someplace they'll just keep
23 pushing to go that way. And if you have fencing to
24 keep them off the roads, every so far there needs to
25 be some kind of crossing for them to be able to cross

1 under the roadways. And I didn't hear anything about
2 that.

3 Another issue is the continued use of
4 mitigation of relocation. And I know a couple of
5 people that are certified tortoise biologists, and
6 they repeatedly tell me that it always fails. The
7 tortoises, because they want to be where they came
8 from, they'll just keep pushing and pushing to get
9 back to those areas and wind up like I guess up on
10 Porter when it was a big disaster and on some other
11 areas.

12 And in conjunction with the continued
13 drought, and the long-range forecast calls for another
14 dry winter this year. And I'm really not looking
15 forward to that. I know in our area there have been
16 no baby quail and no rabbits reproducing. They
17 haven't reproduced at all. And this happened in the
18 last drought cycle, and I don't think there's been
19 enough time between the last drought cycle and this
20 drought cycle for populations to increase.

21 Already we're seeing coyotes with
22 mange, that happened in the last drought cycle. And
23 the number dropped way off, and they died. And now
24 we're seeing them again. And evidently the stress of
25 not having enough to eat is too much for them.

1 Another issue with mitigation and the
2 relocation is somehow to write it up so that these
3 animals can share habitat. We're working with --
4 Reservoir right now, with DWP, the tribes are. And
5 their mitigation for Mojave ground squirrel and for
6 tortoise is to relocate them. And neither one of
7 those relocate worth a darn. And there needs to be
8 some kind of module that would be acceptable to Fish
9 and Wildlife that they can put their employees through
10 to train them to watch for tortoises and to look under
11 tires before they move and things like that.

12 And be able to share a habitat. And
13 that's something I think is doable, but their
14 liability issue. And if they can mitigate that
15 liability issue somehow, that would be a big plus.
16 And educating the public, people in urban areas
17 continue to feed ravens. And the ravens are really
18 good at coming and begging.

19 And I did Watershed Coordinator for 15
20 years here, and that was one of the things, they
21 handed out one-sheet information sheets to people
22 about not feeding ravens and not encouraging them, but
23 people continue to do that. And there needs to be
24 enough information out there to let people know that
25 it's not a positive thing to feed wildlife, especially

1 ravens. You know, people like to feed their birds and
2 ravens will move right in and be the first in line
3 every time. So anyway, that's what I have to say on
4 that. Thank you.

5 MS. FESNOCK: So Randy, do you want me
6 to answer some of those, or do you want me to wait?

7 CHAIR BANIS: No, of course. Happy to
8 have you respond if you have additional words.

9 MS. FESNOCK: So I just wanted to
10 assure you that yes, tortoise crossings are critical
11 to the fence and in long sections of fencing,
12 crossings and underpasses associated with roads are
13 part of the design, absolutely. Thank you.

14 MR. ROBINSON: Thank you.

15 CHAIR BANIS: Amy, this is Randy. In
16 the past when we've had status updates, I'm used to
17 seeing mention of the respiratory disease. Is there
18 any update on the status of that risk factor?

19 MS. FESNOCK: So the respiratory
20 diseases is really quite interesting, right? It
21 actually appears that we went through what would be
22 considered an epizootic phase a couple of decades ago
23 where the disease itself was pretty rampant. It was
24 hitting animals and it was novel to that population.
25 And it was wiping a bunch of animals out associated

1 with that.

2 At this point in time when we are
3 looking at disease testing across the landscape, we
4 are finding individuals that are positive for the
5 disease, but do not appear to be symptomatic. So it
6 has now shifted into what would be considered an
7 enzootic phase as far as, and I don't want to call
8 this "herd immunity", but the concept is essentially
9 the tortoise individuals that were really susceptible
10 have all died. And the ones that survived are there
11 and they are producing kids and they seem to be okay.

12 We're also seeing indications of
13 tortoises showing that they are positive for disease,
14 but then in six months or 12 months they're retested
15 and they're not showing the disease. So there appears
16 to be something that is working naturally. And yes,
17 it was critical during that epizootic phase for
18 causing large declines in populations.

19 At this point, I don't want to say it's
20 kind of worked through everything, but that's what the
21 data seems to be indicating right now, is that we have
22 reached that kind of enzootic level. It will stay in
23 the background at relatively low levels until there's
24 some change in habitat that allows a disease event to
25 kind of pop up and then kind of range. But right now

1 it's not looking -- we've made it past the bad part of
2 that, I guess is where it looks like the data is
3 indicating.

4 CHAIR BANIS: That's fascinating.
5 That's helpful. I just want to recognize to thank the
6 five Field Offices for having put in for grant
7 requests to the off-highway vehicle motor recreation
8 divisions G21 grant cycle. And it looks like all five
9 were preliminarily awarded their grants.

10 So congratulations to five Field
11 Offices for successfully being funded under that
12 program. So we'll see some more acreage returning
13 hopefully in the long term, return to a sustainable
14 habitat.

15 MR. STOVIN: Randy and Amy, this is Ed.
16 It seems like the ravens are the worst problem for the
17 desert tortoise. And I feel for you with the uphill
18 battle trying to regain some population. Could more
19 drastic measures be taken to get rid of the ravens? I
20 know some second amendment types who love to shoot
21 their guns, and they would love to go after birds like
22 those. Is there anything that prevents that? Should
23 that be done in an orderly legal way?

24 MS. FESNOCK: So ravens are protected
25 by the Migratory Bird Treaty Act. So you as an

1 individual cannot go out and just shoot a raven. That
2 would be breaking the law, and I do not advise you to
3 do that. As we have been coming to the realization
4 that the raven issue has to be addressed regionally,
5 we are working with Fish and Wildlife Service for a
6 regulation change in Migratory Bird Treaty Act that
7 would allow for the management of migratory birds that
8 are having impacts on listed species.

9 And those of you that are interested in
10 this change of regulation, there should be something
11 coming out in the Federal Register in
12 October/November/December in the original timeline
13 scope that I had heard from Fish and Wildlife Service.
14 And the interesting place that we're in right now is
15 in order to do this egg oiling, we do have to get a
16 permit from Migratory Bird Treaty Office that allows
17 us to do this effort.

18 However that permit only allows us to
19 remove eggs or individuals in such a way as to not
20 trend the population declining. And in order for us
21 to be successful with the tortoise, we desperately
22 need to shift the population of ravens towards
23 declining. This new regulation would allow for those
24 regional management plans, where in a given region
25 like the Mojave Desert, we would no longer be required

1 to maintain ravens at the current level. We could
2 actually get a permit that would allow us to remove
3 enough ravens to shift that population downward.

4 But until that new regulation is in
5 place, our hands are kind of tied as far as what we
6 are allowed to do.

7 MR. STOVIN: Yeah. Thank you, Amy. I
8 appreciate that. I've kind of known the Migratory
9 Bird Act had something to do with protecting those
10 guys. Will you please keep the DAC informed on this
11 process? If you need comments from the public or from
12 the DAC, I'd be happy to help with that. I would love
13 to see ravens removed from the desert. I've been
14 going out there a long time and in my early days you
15 never saw them out there. Now you go out and see so
16 many of them.

17 MS. FESNOCK: Correct. Yeah. It would
18 be so -- the numbers of ravens that you see right now
19 is insanely high compared to where it was even back in
20 the 1970s, right?

21 MR. STOVIN: So many more people living
22 out there than there used to be, and the trash and all
23 the stuff. For those of you on the DAC, in Imperial
24 County they take some pretty strong measures to reduce
25 ravens. They have dumpsters that are inside a three-

1 dimensional cage. They never lock, it's just to keep
2 the ravens out of the trash. And the Imperial Sand
3 Dunes have dumpsters with folding lids. It's okay to
4 put trash in there, but please don't leave the lid
5 open because we don't want those birds out there.

6 So if we could do something about that,
7 I think that would be awesome. I mean I love seeing
8 those tortoise out there. I don't see them very
9 often, but I have seen them, and I'd love to see some
10 more. I'd love to see that population flourish.

11 MS. POWELL: This is Jayne. My
12 question is about the 5:1 mitigation ratio. Is that a
13 U.S. Fish and Wildlife as well as a California Fish
14 and Wildlife mitigation ratio, or is that specific to
15 the BLM lands?

16 MS. FESNOCK: So the 5:1 ratio in
17 tortoise conservation areas is a ratio that was agreed
18 upon by the Desert Tortoise Management Oversight
19 Group, which is the group of all the agency heads that
20 manage lands in the desert. So it would be DOD and
21 Park Service and BLM. And the list is long, there's
22 13 or 15 agencies that are part of the MOG.

23 That 5:1 ratio was agreed upon actually
24 in the early 1990s, like 1991, '92. That is specific
25 to tortoise conservation areas. If you're looking at

1 other BLM lands that are outside of tortoise
2 conservation areas, your mitigation ratio is about
3 1:1.

4 When it comes to permits issued by the
5 California Department of Fish and Wildlife, they are
6 not held to that 5:1, and they have situations where
7 they have required higher than that. I do not have
8 any knowledge of anybody trying to do a project for
9 less than that in the 13 years or so that I've been
10 working with BLM.

11 And to be clear, Fish and Wildlife
12 Service cannot really prescribe that ratio. Fish and
13 Wildlife Service, when they're doing their biological
14 opinions have to deal with the project that is
15 presented in front of them. They legally cannot say,
16 "You have to do X, Y, and Z." That would be
17 considered a major change, and the ESA, the Endangered
18 Species Act, prevents Fish and Wildlife Service from
19 doing a major change to a proposed action.

20 So when you're looking for when the
21 authority for that 5:1 ratio comes from, it's actually
22 the BLM's Land Use Plans. We've negotiated that. It
23 was publicly disclosed. It's written into our Land
24 Use Plans that this is what we are going to do. So
25 following the Administrative Procedures Act, we have

1 to implement what our Land Use Plans say we will do.

2 CHAIR BANIS: Jayne, go ahead. And
3 then I've got a speakers list behind you.

4 MS. POWELL: And my second question is
5 on the fencing, and I appreciate the response on the
6 crossings, but in terms of the genetic diversity or
7 limitation that the fence creates, have you looked at
8 that?

9 MS. FESNOCK: If we are concerned that
10 the tortoise fence limits genetic diversity, the
11 geneticists that have been studying that essentially
12 indicates we need to move one tortoise across the
13 fence every 20 to 40 years. And if we do not see that
14 kind of natural movement, which we fully expect and
15 have documentation of that kind of natural movement
16 using the crossings, but should we have documentation
17 that indicates that we are not seeing that, it is
18 better to stop the bleeding, you know, that loss of
19 the current adults because we need them to produce
20 babies.

21 And it would be better for us to then
22 pick up and move one of them once every 20 to 40
23 years. And that kind of level of management is fully
24 doable, right? I mean we could handle having to move,
25 you know, one tortoise every 20 to 40 years. But the

1 loss of animals on the freeway, we can't make that up.
2 We really do need to have fencing to stop that loss.

3 MS. POWELL: Thank you.

4 CHAIR BANIS: Thanks, Michelle for
5 alerting me to some hands that are up. I'm going to
6 go down the list. And we're going to start with, if I
7 may, Billy followed by Jim and then Dan.

8 MR. MITCHELL: Yeah, thank you Mr.
9 Chairman. I was just going to mention that, whether
10 you could see those hands on your screen. One thing
11 I'd like, Amy, is the tortoise out there in California
12 City, do they still got that tortoise preserve going?

13 MS. FESNOCK: They do, yes.

14 MR. MITCHELL: And what's the situation
15 there? Are they any ups, downs, or do you know?

16 MS. FESNOCK: Yeah, so that's part of
17 the depressing news. Even within the Desert Tortoise
18 Natural Area that we comanage with the Desert Tortoise
19 Preservation Council, the tortoises in DTNRA are also
20 dramatically declined. And so in that case because we
21 know that conservation area is fully fenced, right,
22 we're not losing those animals to vehicle strikes.

23 What we're losing animals to there is
24 raven predation, crazy amounts of raven predation, and
25 prolonged drought that is impacting the survival and

1 the fitness of the adults that are still there and
2 then impacting juveniles to make it through those
3 first couple of winters to then be able to be big
4 enough to, you know, start growing and be able to
5 reach the size to have babies of their own. Because
6 it takes a tortoise approximately 20 years to become a
7 large enough size to be reproductive. So those losses
8 of small tortoises to ravens is really hampering that
9 population.

10 MR. MITCHELL: Yeah, the next question,
11 I was the first rancher they took out for the tortoise
12 when it was listed. And that's why -- there's a ranch
13 right there. And my grandparents around 1920 were on
14 it, and I ended up buying it back in '86. They took
15 me out in '95 I think. They had to buy me out
16 actually. That's where all the stuff in the bills
17 from Congress came in. What have they done there?
18 They were going to do a study on that piece, and did
19 they even put any tortoise over on there?

20 And the next question is, what about
21 the Honda study? They have three sections of land:
22 One with X amount of rain, one was three-quarter, one
23 was an inch or an inch and a half. Was there anything
24 that came out of those studies that Honda had to do
25 for that track that they built back in the '90s? Or

1 do you know?

2 MS. FESNOCK: So I know of the Honda
3 story. It's before my time, so I would have to do
4 some digging to get some answers. But I would be
5 happy to do that. And then I'm not familiar with the
6 study you asked about related to removing cattle from
7 the land. Can you give me a title and I can look into
8 that, also?

9 MR. MITCHELL: Yeah, they actually
10 bought -- the Tortoise Council and I forget, some
11 other people actually bought the ranch from me because
12 of the amount of tortoise. And then they were going
13 to do a study. And I just never have figured out or
14 had the question to ask anybody about it if it
15 transpired or not.

16 MS. FESNOCK: I will look into that and
17 get back to you by the October meeting.

18 MR. MITCHELL: Okay. I was just
19 curious. Thank you very much.

20 CHAIR BANIS: Billy, that was
21 Blackwater Well over there by Cuddeback, right?

22 MR. MITCHELL: Yeah, exactly.

23 CHAIR BANIS: Blackwater Well. Thank
24 you, Billy. Jim, thanks for waiting.

25 MR. BAGLEY: Hi, Randy. Thank you.

1 And Amy, this is really fascinating, interesting data.
2 It's one of my the most interesting updates I've heard
3 in a long time on the desert tortoise. I have a
4 concern with the desert tortoise fencing with
5 unintended consequences. And I just want to raise
6 this as an issue again.

7 The fencing has the ability not only to
8 limit the migration of the tortoise but also reptiles,
9 rodents, and larger anthropods [sic] like tarantulas.
10 So that's a real concern to me that we may be creating
11 unintended consequences in the long run. And I think
12 that just needs to be in the dialogue when we talk
13 about doing more extensive fencing. I think that
14 tortoise crossings and other wildlife crossings need
15 to be in the long-range planning for the
16 transportation agencies like Caltrans and San
17 Bernardino County because I really think that that's
18 an important part of it.

19 My concern with the fencing is not just
20 the breeding, but as you know, rainfall can be very
21 localized so forage is very localized for animals,
22 lizards, tortoises, rodents, and we create these
23 fences that could really have some very negative long-
24 term consequences.

25 One particular question I also have, I

1 haven't heard anything about shell necrosis in a
2 while, either. Is that sort of bone by the way with
3 the upper respiratory syndrome? And just a comment,
4 in my lifetime there's been a dramatic decline in the
5 tortoises. It is heartbreaking, but I also have a
6 love/hate relationship with the ravens. And I don't
7 necessarily want to just penalize them because there a
8 more prolific species. I think it's part of the
9 natural process. So we've just got to be wise in
10 everything that we do.

11 MR. MITCHELL: Exactly. You know,
12 Randy, just one other thing is, you know, I mean I go
13 back to Barstow before I-15 went through and was still
14 the old 91 and 466 and all -- roads. Every year as I
15 remember as a kid, our outing was to go out and count
16 tortoises and number them and see if you could find
17 that tortoise the next year. I mean that's how many
18 tortoise there were. They would take I think the
19 fourth, fifth, and sixth graders they would do that.

20 And that's how close -- and there were
21 quite a bit of them back then, you know. It was
22 amazing. But I strictly think, they try to blame it
23 on cattle, they try to do it on all kinds of stuff,
24 but the main problem is the raven, you know.

25 And I agree with Jim, you know. You

1 can't sacrifice one group for another. So you know
2 you're playing like the Great Creator. And you've got
3 to do it carefully, you know. The raven is there for
4 some reason. I don't know why it doesn't have a
5 predator. Only us now to save another species, but I
6 think you made a very good statement about that. It's
7 got to be really controlled on not taking them down
8 too far, but still let them survive, too. That's all.

9 CHAIR BANIS: Thanks, Bill. I've got
10 Dan Taylor. Thanks for waiting, Dan. You've got the
11 floor.

12 MR. TAYLOR: Thank you very much. I
13 have two different questions. The first one is, Amy,
14 you showed a map in your presentation, the very first
15 one. And you spoke about the unauthorized routes. Do
16 we know what percentage of that map you showed was
17 unauthorized routes? And is there any models going on
18 of how it would impact the tortoises by closing down
19 those unauthorized routes?

20 MS. FESNOCK: So I am going to say I
21 have no idea how many of those routes were actually
22 unauthorized or authorized. The map that I had
23 available to me to make that graphic did not have that
24 information. So I apologize for not being able to
25 answer that. If that is of interest to the DAC, I can

1 certainly delve into that and provide additional
2 information that can be sent out prior to the October
3 meeting. I've already forgotten what you second
4 question was. I'm sorry.

5 MR. TAYLOR: Just since they've done
6 models on the fencing, did they do models on
7 reclaiming those unauthorized routes and closing them
8 off and how does that impact the tortoise?

9 MS. FESNOCK: So no we have not done
10 that yet, but yes, that is one -- so we have a variety
11 of things that are kind of in play. The information
12 that I shared today was research that was far enough
13 along that it was either already published or the head
14 researcher was comfortable with the information being
15 shared.

16 Some of these questions about, you
17 know, how much can we gain back from doing the amazing
18 habitat restoration work that the Ridgecrest and
19 Barstow Field Offices and, you know, all of them are
20 doing. We are in the process of wrapping our heads
21 around that, of trying to understand what it is that
22 we gain or do not gain from that as well as having a
23 better understanding of how long it can take to get an
24 unauthorized route actually not being used. It can
25 sometimes take two or three or four, you know,

1 treatments before the recreational public no longer
2 sees it or forgets about it. And then it can actually
3 begin that kind of recovery.

4 So there's several analyses that are
5 kind of starting in that, but we're not at a place
6 where I have any kind of knowledge or understanding to
7 share at this point.

8 MR. TAYLOR: I appreciate that. My
9 last question was, you talked about the head-start
10 program if the fencing goes forward. Where would you
11 be getting those tortoises and how are you going to be
12 able to raise enough to do the 25 to 50 per year? How
13 is that going to take place?

14 MS. FESNOCK: So right now we don't
15 actually have permission to do that head-starting
16 associated with fencing. So there's a variety of
17 people in play, and you have to kind of socialize an
18 idea, right? You have to kind of throw an idea out
19 and get people thinking out it and really kind of
20 chewing on it and saying, "Does that make sense? And
21 how much does it cost to actually produce a head-start
22 tortoise?" And there's a lot in that.

23 Right now there is a head-start program
24 associated with Mojave Preserve. There's a head-start
25 program associated with MCAGCC, Fort Irwin or Edwards,

1 one of those. I think it's Edwards has one. So
2 should Fish and Wildlife Service decision makers come
3 to the realization that they are going to need more
4 head-starting than the existing capacity, we then look
5 at where those additional head-start facilities could
6 be.

7 The way those existing facilities work
8 right now is they have identified areas where they go
9 out, they track adult female tortoises, they do some
10 X-rays on them to see how close they are to laying a
11 clutch. When they're close to laying, they pull them
12 into captivity, have the eggs laid in captivity, and
13 then put the female back out. So in a good rain year,
14 right, those females would then still produce that
15 second or third clutch that would then be laid out in
16 the natural habitat.

17 So part of this is again knowing where
18 you're going to be setting up your head-start
19 facilities and then pulling animals in. There's a lot
20 in that as far as if we get to a point which, you
21 know, I don't know that we ever will, where we need to
22 be releasing hundreds or thousands of baby tortoises
23 to really reoccupy like all of the range where we have
24 fencing in place, that's a totally different scale.
25 And they're going to have to think about how they

1 would handle that kind of level.

2 But right now the Mojave Preserve, the
3 way they're managing their level, they have about 100
4 baby tortoises a year that they would then be able to
5 head-start and then put back out. So, you know, I
6 think the existing capacity can certainly start
7 testing the validity of that model and seeing if that
8 model really does predict what you would have happen
9 in the real world. And then if that model ends up
10 being correct, we would have to investigate how to
11 actually implement it at a larger scale range wide.

12 MR. TAYLOR: Thank you, Amy. I
13 appreciate your information.

14 CHAIR BANIS: I see Billy, you have
15 your hand up again. Are you good?

16 MR. MITCHELL: Yeah, I have one more
17 question for Amy. Do you any information on how the
18 Twentynine Palms tortoise when they took them off and
19 put them on the -- or Ord Mountain? Did you have
20 anything on how that went?

21 MS. FESNOCK: My understanding is that
22 that is going relatively well. I am not sure whether
23 Katrina will be talking about -- I think she has that
24 identified, but maybe not. My understanding is that
25 it is going reasonably well. Although I will tell you

1 right now that the drought of '21, of this year, is
2 terrible. And the coyotes have really picked up and
3 are eating a whole bunch of study tortoises that are
4 out there whether they've been translocated or not.

5 I mean coyote depredation on tortoises
6 this year is really, really -- what I am hearing from
7 the researchers in the field is that they're seeing a
8 big impact of canids with this drought. So I don't
9 know how that will end up having ramifications with
10 the MCAGCC story or not.

11 Because when the Fort Irwin
12 translocation and coyote story first broke, it
13 appeared that the coyotes were decimating only those
14 animals that had been translocated. And the first
15 part of that story seemed to be that translocation put
16 them at a higher risk.

17 MR. MITCHELL: Okay.

18 MS. FESNOCK: After that initial
19 release of information, we got, you know, input from a
20 variety of other researchers raising their hands
21 saying, "No, no, no. My population has not been
22 translocated and we're seeing crazy levels of canid
23 predation also."

24 So once we got more information from
25 the other places in the field, that idea that

1 translocated tortoises were inadvertently being eaten
2 by coyotes more did not hold up. And it is drought
3 causes coyotes to eat a tortoise whether it's been
4 moved or not. So I think we have to still wait to see
5 what happens with the MCAGCC translocation tortoises.

6 MR. MITCHELL: Okay. You know what,
7 I've been dealing with this tortoise since 1992 I
8 think it was. And I've got to admit that you have
9 really answered a lot of questions we've had for ages
10 on these studies. You did a really good job, ma'am.
11 Thank you.

12 MS. FESNOCK: Thank you.

13 MR. MITCHELL: I'm good, Randy.

14 CHAIR BANIS: Terrific, Billy. My plan
15 here is to close this presentation and then move right
16 into lunch if there's no objection. And we'll push
17 Andrew's update on the film permitting for as soon as
18 we get back from lunch. Is there any objection to
19 that plan as we close this out?

20 MR. BAGLEY: Sounds like a good idea.

21 CHAIR BANIS: With that said, are there
22 any last comments for Amy on this amazing
23 presentation?

24 MR. BAGLEY: Excellent presentation.
25 Thank you.

1 MR. MITCHELL: Thank you.

2 MR. ROBINSON: Great presentation.

3 CHAIR BANIS: Before I break, I only
4 want to say Dan, back to that map, the restoration has
5 its own challenges in that area as well all know is
6 checkerboard public and private. And also the public
7 lands that are there are dotted with mining claims and
8 the recreation funds that are available to do the
9 restoration projects don't allow you to do it on
10 private property.

11 And it's hard to do it on mining claims
12 without the permission of the claimant, which is very,
13 very hard to get in a timely way. So it's not always
14 easy making those roads go away even if you have the
15 money.

16 MR. MITCHELL: Yeah.

17 MR. TAYLOR: That was the challenge. I
18 did figure that would be a big challenge to try to do
19 that, and it kind of was the purpose of my question.

20 CHAIR BANIS: Thanks, everybody.
21 Sorry, I didn't mean to make that go on and on, but
22 with that said, why don't we have a break for our
23 lunch? Let's make it a 12:45 return. That will make
24 it a 33, 34-minute break. And we'll see everybody
25 back at 12:45.

1 (Off the record.)

2 CHAIR BANIS: Let's call the meeting
3 back to order at 12:50. And if there's no objections,
4 we'll start right off where we left off. And that was
5 with a presentation by Andrew on the film permits and
6 filming in the CDD. Interesting story if you folks
7 haven't heard it yet.

8 MANAGER ARCHULETA: All right. Thank
9 you, Randy. And Matthew if you want to share those
10 slides.

11 MR. GIBBS: Sure. Stand by.

12 MANAGER ARCHULETA: While he's getting
13 that up, you know, as Dan has mentioned, commercial
14 filming on the California Desert is a pretty big deal,
15 a pretty big industry whether it be small business
16 doing commercials or major motion pictures, you know,
17 filming pieces for major films. I think every Field
18 Office has had quite a few film permits. And so it's
19 a very, very big industry here in the desert. We can
20 go to the next one, Matthew.

21 So I'm going to go through this fairly
22 quickly, but definitely want to take time at the end
23 for questions. So last year there was a case we
24 referred to as "Price vs. Barr". And an individual
25 sued the Park Service. And in that lawsuit, the court

1 ruled that the permit and fee requirements for
2 commercial filming that DOI follows are
3 unconstitutional.

4 So as a result the court enjoined or
5 they prohibited the use of Public Law 106-206 and 43
6 CFR 5. So Public Law 106, that allows DOI and USDA to
7 establish a fee system for commercial filming and
8 activities and for some other purposes. And then 42
9 CFR 5 are really DOI's implementing regulations of
10 that law. So at this point in time, we are not
11 allowed to use that public law or those implementing
12 regulations to issue permits or collect fees for
13 commercial filming permits. Next.

14 I don't know the status of any appeals.
15 And I know there has been a lot of discussion
16 internally with DOI about filing an appeal. And I
17 apologize I can't give you a status update on that.
18 But in the meantime we are following some interim
19 direction. And we are requiring and issuing permits
20 under FLPMA, 43 CFR Twentynine20.

21 And that section of FLPMA is not as
22 specific to commercial permits as the previous public
23 law is, but it does authorize us to issue leases,
24 permits, and easements for various uses to occupy the
25 land and development on public lands. And so we feel

1 like we can require and issue those film permits under
2 this law as well.

3 There is a clause in there under 43 CFR
4 2920 that does not require a lease or permit or
5 easement for activities that are considered casual
6 use. And just keep in mind, this goes way beyond
7 filming permits, but a casual use is any short-term
8 non-commercial activity that doesn't cause appreciable
9 damage or disturbance to public lands.

10 So in the realm of film permits, if
11 somebody goes out there to film whatever it is out on
12 public lands, they're not going to cause any land
13 disturbance. They don't intend to use it for
14 commercial activity. That does not require a permit.
15 On the other hand, if Dan comes to us looking to do a
16 major commercial for Ferrari and you know is wanting
17 to do that on public land, then we would require a
18 permit under this portion of FLPMA.

19 So that's how we're operating right
20 now. I've not seen any new changes come down. That's
21 kind of the current status. So next slide. So I
22 wasn't going into much more than that. You know that
23 case is available online if you just Google "Price vs.
24 Barr" you'll get the actual case listing if you want
25 to read the details. I just wanted to give you an

1 update on where we are with issuing permits. And with
2 that I'll take questions. And it looks like Dan,
3 you're up first.

4 MR. TAYLOR: Go figure, I have to ask a
5 question, right? I can tell you that the vast
6 majority of the film industry disagreed with this
7 judgment and wants an appeal done because they believe
8 that the permits are necessary and important for
9 protecting the lands and to protect the industry while
10 they're filming on public lands. So I can tell you
11 that it's a very small minority in the industry who
12 sees this judgment as beneficial at all to filming.

13 So having said that, I did have a
14 question and it just left my mind. I hate it when
15 that happens. It happens way too often. The more
16 gray this gets, the more often it happens. I'll stop
17 there for now because the question is gone out of my
18 head, but -- oh I remember what it is now.

19 Currently some of the decisions on what
20 is commercial and what is not commercial I think in my
21 experience are some of the ones I've seen come across
22 my desk needs to be a little bit more, what's the word
23 I'm looking for, you need to scrutinize it a little
24 bit more because some of them have been passed on as a
25 letter of authorization versus a permit that probably

1 should have had a permit only because even though
2 they're a small crew of ten people, it was a
3 commercial shoot.

4 And I think that's where the challenge
5 is for these District Managers is that it's hard to
6 tell, you know. You guys are in a difficult position
7 trying to evaluate, you know, based on size and is it
8 commercial? It's a big challenge. And I've seen a
9 few slip through that I thought should have had
10 permits, so I would just say that maybe we need to
11 take a look at them a little bit closer when you're
12 evaluating these applications.

13 I'd be happy to lend my opinion on that
14 on whether they should be permitted or not. But I can
15 see where you guys are stuck between a rock and a hard
16 place with this particular judgment. And it doesn't
17 seem like anywhere you move you're going to get
18 yourself in a pickle.

19 So I'd just say just be a little more -
20 - I would be a little bit more heavy handed on it, but
21 that's my personal opinion. But I do think that we
22 need to maybe take a look at some of those letters of
23 authorization and they may have been turned into
24 permits in the future. Just be aware of that, that
25 there's more commercial use than expected.

1 MANAGER ARCHULETA: Dan, I really
2 appreciate your perspective. I would agree that a
3 permit is really helpful in that it creates a
4 certainty for the company or the filming company, and
5 it makes it very clear, you know, what the sidebars
6 are for that activity in terms of land disturbance.
7 So I completely agree with you. And that is the
8 intent, you know, of that law.

9 So with respect with commercial/non-
10 commercial, the direction was to give us more
11 discretion or to use more discretion on what we
12 consider commercial versus non-commercial in that
13 category as to whether, I'm forgetting the term there,
14 as to whether we're calling it casual use or not. So
15 that's why you're seeing some slight differences there
16 by Field Office, Dan. So we're trying to avoid the
17 pickle and walk that fine line.

18 I think as we're moving forward I hope
19 we're getting better and a little more consistent with
20 applying that, but just so you know, the direction was
21 to consider some activities as casual use even though
22 they may have a commercial component in them.

23 MR. TAYLOR: I see that, and I
24 understand. You guys are put in a difficult position
25 with this particular lawsuit just based on how your

1 rules and regs are formulated. So I totally
2 understand. Erring on the side of caution makes
3 sense, but it's still frustrating on my end because I
4 see it from the film industry's point of view on how
5 some things are going through. Because I get
6 concerned that there are funds that you desperately
7 need, you're not getting because of this lawsuit. And
8 that's what frustrates me.

9 MANAGER ARCHULETA: Yeah. Definitely
10 appreciate your perspective there on the funding
11 aspect as well because that is a big source of funding
12 for several of the Field Offices. I think Dick was
13 next.

14 MR. HOLLIDAY: Yeah, I had a question.
15 It was kind of interesting there that you're looking
16 at commercial versus a non-commercial. We've had some
17 issues where I volunteer at a company called Funco
18 Motorsports. And we have a Customer Appreciation Day
19 periodically where, you know, we say, "All our people
20 are going to show up at a certain place on this
21 weekend and have commercial things" and the permits
22 for that have been pretty horrendous.

23 And I wonder if that's going to change
24 now. And we're not making any money on that. It's
25 not a commercial event. It's just a customer

1 appreciation type deal although it can have quite a
2 few people.

3 MANAGER ARCHULETA: So without going
4 into a lot of detail, there are other things that come
5 into play as to whether it's commercial or non-
6 commercial and you know, whether you're caring for
7 folks out -- what level of care is expected of you as
8 the sponsor of the event, those kinds of things as
9 well as whether there's a profit or whether there's
10 money being collected.

11 There is some discretion for Field
12 Managers, so you probably see some difference across
13 Field Offices. We're doing our best to be consistent,
14 but you know having five different Field Offices,
15 you're going to see some differences there. Not sure
16 if I completely addressed your question, but whatever
17 Field Office you're in, definitely talk to the Field
18 Manager and have a discussion with them about it.

19 MR. HOLLIDAY: Yeah. Okay. Thank you.
20 It was just kind of interesting, the whole operation.
21 Thank you.

22 MANAGER ARCHULETA: Yep. Billy.

23 MR. MITCHELL: Yeah. You know, I've
24 had some film people contact me about cowboy stuff or
25 cattle being in it or stuff like that. I had an off-

1 road group that was just like, well I'll just make it
2 short. What's the ramifications? Just so many people
3 that's got to be in it before you get a permit? What
4 actually do they do?

5 MANAGER ARCHULETA: I'm sorry. I'm not
6 sure I'm understanding the question.

7 MR. MITCHELL: Okay. There was a group
8 that came, there was only like, I don't know, three
9 vehicles and you know five guys or something. Off-
10 road, they have a company with lights, and you know
11 stuff to fix your cars up. And they came and they
12 were inside the ranch up by the cattle guard and
13 stuff. I guess what I'm asking is what is the
14 requirement for them to go through? Because I asked
15 them if they had a permit and they said no, but I
16 didn't do anything about it. They had no animals or
17 nothing in it, so.

18 MANAGER ARCHULETA: You hit on a good
19 point. So there are some obviously commercial filming
20 activities that go on on public land that we don't
21 know about. They don't come in for a permit. If it
22 is a commercial activity, they are required to come in
23 and get a permit, but we know a lot of that goes on
24 illegally if you will as well. You know if they're
25 using it for personal use, then no, they don't need a

1 permit. But yeah if it's a commercial activity, they
2 should be getting one.

3 MR. MITCHELL: But there's no how many
4 people or how many vehicles or this or that? It's
5 just whether you're going to use it commercially or
6 just for yourself? Is that what you're telling me?

7 MANAGER ARCHULETA: All of those things
8 come into play, but the most important or the thing we
9 focus on the most is whether it's commercial or non-
10 commercial, whether they're going to be profiting from
11 it really, and then the level of ground disturbance
12 associated with it or not.

13 MR. MITCHELL: Okay.

14 MR. TAYLOR: If I could jump in real
15 quick, Andrew if you don't mind. Billy, an area has
16 to have a study done for allowing filming. So there's
17 that factor, too. So if there's never been any EA
18 done or there hasn't been categorical exclusion or
19 anything that that would allow filming in those areas,
20 they can't film there anyway. So there's other
21 factors involved in that.

22 So I would say on my end, you see
23 somebody filming and they tell you they don't have a
24 permit, I'd call the ranger dispatch and report it and
25 let the rangers take care of it.

1 MR. MITCHELL: Yeah, that's what I was
2 getting to. Is that who to call or what to do? All
3 right. Thank you.

4 MANAGER ARCHULETA: Thank you, Dan.
5 Jim.

6 MR. BAGLEY: Well just to let you know,
7 I used to have a location business years ago. I'm not
8 in the business anymore. And it's certainly changed
9 how permitting happens on the lands, but I also don't
10 want to become so bureaucratic that you kill
11 entrepreneurial opportunities for people.

12 When I was involved in the business
13 years ago a lot of the people were students, or they
14 were people that were hoping to make a profit. And
15 I'll guarantee you they never did. And we've got to
16 have that opportunity for those people, too. And one
17 of the biggest problems I used to have, the filming is
18 so weather driven sometimes. And what happens is
19 spontaneous.

20 Somebody would call me from Zuma Beach
21 in Malibu and say, "We're fogged in. We need to go
22 somewhere." And I'd say, "Why don't you come to the
23 desert?" And you know they're spending \$1,000 or
24 thousands of dollars a day based on the size of the
25 crew. And to have to wait for a permit process can be

1 cumbersome.

2 So I hope we have a way to accommodate
3 those uses, too. And you know it's very different
4 when you're talking about somebody who's got a
5 million-dollar budget and they're staging major trucks
6 and somebody who's coming out literally in an SUV with
7 a handful of folks and a model. So just giving that
8 as my input.

9 MANAGER ARCHULETA: I appreciate that,
10 Jim. Definitely understand that. And there is a big
11 difference there in the capability of different people
12 wanting to film on public land. And that does create
13 the walking that fine line for us but understood. Any
14 other questions?

15 MR. MITCHELL: I'm good.

16 MANAGER ARCHULETA: All right. Well
17 that's all I had on it, so I'll turn it back over to
18 you, Randy.

19 CHAIR BANIS: That's one of the more
20 interesting issues to come down the pike in the years.

21 MANAGER ARCHULETA: It's very
22 surprising, yes.

23 CHAIR BANIS: Yeah. You just never
24 know. Thanks, Andrew. Okay. Going down to the next
25 item on the agenda, it's lunch again. What's say we

1 skip this one and just move right into Dana
2 Stephenson's presentation on recreation. And it's
3 nice to see you again, Dana. Welcome to the Desert
4 Advisory Council meeting. And the floor is yours.

5 MS. STEPHENSON: Awesome. Thank you,
6 Randy. It's good to see you. And welcome new DAC
7 members. I am Dana Stephenson. I am the California
8 Desert District Outdoor Recreation Planner, but I have
9 been with the Desert District for over 15 years
10 working primarily out of the Ridgecrest Field Office.
11 So very familiar with OHV, Recreation, and the Bureau
12 of Land Management. I'm actually born and raised a
13 desert rat as well, so I know all about it.

14 So I'm going to go ahead and start my
15 presentation. It's definitely not going to be an hour
16 long. And then I will be happy to answer questions.
17 So let me go ahead and share my screen. Share sound.
18 All right. Everybody got it?

19 MR. MITCHELL: Yep.

20 MS. STEPHENSON: All right. Awesome.
21 So like I said, I'm Dana Stephenson and I just kind of
22 wanted to go through, and I think sometimes we, you
23 know, forget sometimes our BLM vision and mission. So
24 before I dive into the bulk of things, I wanted to
25 give you a little background on who we are.

1 So the Bureau of Land Management is a
2 multiuse government agency under the Department of
3 Interior with the mission to sustain the healthy
4 diversity and productivity of public lands for the use
5 and enjoyment of present and future generations.

6 So yeah I've just put on a slide. I
7 know Greg put on a slide similar just showing the
8 California Desert District with all of the yellow
9 being the Bureau of Land Management. That encompasses
10 about over 11 million acres that the California Desert
11 District manages.

12 So within that, you know, we have all
13 types of recreational opportunities. I know a lot of
14 times we focus on just OHV, but you know, we have
15 hiking, mountain biking, equestrians, sightseeing,
16 target shooting, and the list can go on and on. And
17 these are just some of our, you know, different types
18 of uses within our different five Field Offices. And
19 continued, photography, camping, rockhounding,
20 bouldering, the list goes on and on.

21 With that being said, these numbers are
22 based off our RMIS, which is our Recreation Management
23 Information System. And these visitations are based
24 on the 2019 and '20 fiscal years. You can see they're
25 pretty consistent through each office. Needles is a

1 little large. They don't have open areas like some of
2 our other Field Offices. And then we haven't got our
3 2021 visitation numbers yet. We're coming to the end
4 of our fiscal year, but we our consensus is that it
5 will be higher than normal due to everybody just
6 wanting to get outside, recreate, being kind of cooped
7 up in their houses.

8 I can tell you that Imperial Sand Dunes
9 did get their numbers in, and last year it was over
10 900,000, and this year it's looking at already over a
11 million visitors. And I'm guessing Dumont Dunes is
12 the same. So we've been talking a lot about special
13 recreation permits, so it seems like it was a good
14 slide to start bringing into the group.

15 Special recreation permits are issued
16 to businesses, organizations, and individuals to allow
17 the use of public lands. And there's different types
18 of permits that I want to go into. And I'll give you
19 a little background and examples and we'll spend a
20 little bit of time on this one since it seems to be a
21 hot topic.

22 So the types of permits, commercial
23 use. So these are recreation use of public lands and
24 related waters for financial gain including:
25 Gratuities, donations, gifts. So examples of these

1 would be fundraising, outfitter guides, Jeep tours,
2 and so on.

3 Competitive, which is probably our
4 number one, especially in Barstow, El Centro, and the
5 Ridgecrest Field Offices. They're organized,
6 sanctioned, or structured use events or activities on
7 public lands in which two or more contestants compete.
8 And the following elements need to apply:

9 Participants register into or complete an application
10 for the event or a predetermined course or area is
11 designated. So examples of these would be the OHB
12 motorcycle races and the truck races, horse endurance
13 rides, mountain bike riding, all those would fall
14 under the competitive use.

15 And then we have vending. Vending is
16 temporary, short-term, non-exclusive, reversible
17 authorizations to sell goods or services on public
18 lands in conjunction with a recreation activity. So
19 usually you'll see a lot of these work closely with
20 commercial or competitive permits.

21 And we do have stipulations that fall
22 under this one. You know, they need to produce what
23 they're selling, it can't be anything that's
24 inappropriate, and no selling of alcohol. They have
25 to send us a list and usually photos of the different

1 types of things they're selling on public lands. And
2 like I said it needs to be in connection with another
3 recreation use.

4 And then we have our organized group
5 activity and event use. These are permits intended
6 for group or outdoor recreation activities or events
7 which are neither commercial or competitive. So these
8 would go into the Boy Scouts of America, the family
9 reunions, weddings, high school reunions, and that
10 kind of stuff.

11 And these are usually, it's up the
12 discretion of offices of course, but just an
13 authorization letter can be done for these, and it
14 doesn't need to go into the full SRP steps. As long
15 as you're not, you know, advertising, collecting
16 money, and that kind of stuff, they usually will just
17 do a letter of authorization.

18 And then you have the relationship with
19 other permits. So as you guys were talking about,
20 commercial filming permits issued in conjunction with
21 an SRP. One off of that would be King of the Hammers.
22 And then recreation permits in conjunction with
23 another permit.

24 So cost recovery comes into play when
25 the estimated time for processing, administrating, and

1 monitoring a permit exceeds 50 hours. We only usually
2 have two to three of these in each Field Office per
3 year. And we're trying to find ways to not go into
4 cost recovery because the BLM does recognize that not
5 all the permit holders can afford it, one.

6 And there are ways to work around it,
7 and we're working on that here in the district office.
8 And that's one of the reasons they did bring me on was
9 to try to build consistency and look at ways to reduce
10 going into cost recovery or just reduce the amount of
11 cost recovery that we're asking for.

12 So these are kind of just the steps
13 that we go through to process a permit. It usually
14 takes about 180 days. We ask applicants to submit
15 permits within 180 days, but that's not always the
16 case. And we do recognize that. And it's up to the
17 discretion of the office once again.

18 If somebody is interested in applying
19 for one of those types of permits, they fill a 1232-1
20 Form and that can be found on the BLM website. And
21 fill it out to the best of their knowledge. And then
22 in addition we ask for maps and we ask for an
23 operations plan. And we have a draft one that we are
24 happy to share with folks if they don't really have a
25 starting ground for an operations plan.

1 So we ask for those types of things so
2 we can review and know what the next step is. Are we
3 going to have to do NEPA on this? How many monitors
4 are we going to have to bring in? Is the spectators
5 going to be large or minimal? So those are types are
6 things that we have to start looking at.

7 Once we find out what type of permit
8 they are applying for, we can move forward. And we do
9 try to really urge applicants if they're doing a high-
10 speed race or motorcycle ride to go into an open area
11 that already has a Land Use Plan in place. That does
12 really reduce the BLM from even getting close to that
13 50 hours. Some of these areas already do have CXs in
14 place to cover some of the protecting resources out
15 there.

16 Another step that we ask the applicant
17 to submit is insurance based on what their event is.
18 There's minimum insurance all the way to a maximum
19 insurance depending on what is the event going to
20 occur.

21 So the permit takes place, say, and
22 everybody's out there. We usually do have, if needed
23 for the high-speed races, we'll have monitors on the
24 ground to make sure that the proponent is doing their
25 job, you know. There could be road crossings. There

1 could be close to highways or anything like that.

2 And monitors need to be on the ground.
3 We ask that the proponent has monitors on the ground
4 to make sure that they're keeping spectators back and
5 that they're making sure that their group is in
6 compliance with the stipulations that we send out and
7 they initial. And we just want to make sure everyone
8 is doing their due diligence.

9 Once they finish their event, they need
10 to submit a form and with how many riders were
11 included. It's called the Post-Use Report. And then
12 in addition there is desert tortoise and the Mojave
13 brown squirrel, if they've seen any, they have to
14 report it right away. And so we have a lot of steps
15 and processes.

16 And it looks like a lot on this paper,
17 but we are trying to build consistency so that it's
18 easier and not so confusing for everybody. And if you
19 just reach out to your Field Office and you can always
20 reach out to me. I'm happy to walk anybody through
21 the steps and processes of obtaining an SRP.

22 So these are the SRPs by office. And I
23 might be off one or two. I know that they gave you
24 guys this in your DAC Report as well. So you can see
25 Palm Springs Field Office, that's more commercial.

1 Needles, more commercial use. And then Ridgecrest
2 Field Office, our competitive is probably the highest
3 there.

4 And then El Centro has a large amount
5 mostly with competitive and commercial. They have a
6 large amount of vending there, too, due to the
7 Imperial Sand Dunes. And then Barstow Field Office,
8 you'll see the vendor list is quite high. A large
9 number of those is due to King of the Hammers, and
10 then they have all their competitive, as well.

11 So I just want to show you guys a quick
12 video. So the Rebelle Rally has been going on for
13 about, I think they're going on their sixth year, and
14 they -- driving and navigation across portions of
15 California on legal open routes. They use compasses
16 and road books to navigate. They don't have phones or
17 anything. And it's over eight days.

18 And this video I'm going to show
19 actually started in Nevada and then it went through
20 Bishop, Ridgecrest, Barstow and finished in El Centro.
21 So hold tight and I'm going to share. It's about four
22 minutes, but it really highlights the Field Offices
23 and just shows you some of the SRPs that are out there
24 that we work really well with.

25 And I actually issue this permit

1 because it does cross so many different offices. And
2 we have an MOU and a Delegation of Authority as well
3 which allows Andrew to sign off on these for both
4 Nevada and California side. So give me a few seconds.

5 (Video was played.)

6 MS. STEPHENSON: All right. I'll share
7 my screen again on my presentation. All right. So I
8 really just wanted to show you guys that. I thought
9 it was a great highlight video. They are returning
10 this year where they'll be going through actually the
11 Needles Field Office, Barstow, and El Centro. And
12 that occurs in October. So they already got their
13 permit application in, and we're moving forward with
14 it.

15 So everybody of course knows of the
16 King of the Hammers. I am actually issued the
17 recreation permit along with the Barstow Field Office
18 and Katrina and her crew who are awesome to work with.
19 I also am the Incident Commander On The Ground for
20 this event.

21 So this year for the 2021 King of the
22 Hammers, we had about over 18,000 spectators, pit crew
23 over 3,000, competitors was 909, volunteers 342,
24 production 80, services 94, which is like the
25 restrooms and food services and stuff. And then the

1 staff was 174. This was a great and safe recreation
2 permit that went on due to the multiagency
3 collaboration between San Bernardino, the San
4 Bernardino Sheriff, the Marines, state parks, Bureau
5 of Land Management, and then Dave Cole with King of
6 the Hammers.

7 And then the BLM staff that I had that
8 support me on the ground and for this is amazing to
9 work with. I can call Katrina in a minute, and she
10 has an answer for me. And if she doesn't she finds it
11 for me. So it really was a great and safe event and I
12 thought it went on amazing. And it just seemed like
13 everybody was really happy to be outside.

14 So I know I kind of brought up a little
15 bit the third-party monitoring. For those that don't
16 know what this is, this was brought up by some of the
17 shareholders and the permitholders. And it's due to
18 the cost recovery and trying to keep people out of
19 cost recovery. We did do some test runs. Neil Hamada
20 ran those. We did one in Barstow and then he came
21 into Ridgecrest when I was there, and we did one.

22 What we are finding is it's hard to
23 find a true third-party monitoring. And so these are
24 kind of where we're at now, and we've reported back.
25 We're finding that less than 10 percent of SRPs

1 involve actual cost recovery. Like I said maybe one
2 to two per office. The District Recreation Planner,
3 which is me, I am working diligently not only with the
4 offices but also with the state office, Andrew Burros,
5 to improve consistency throughout the offices.

6 And some things are a case-by-case
7 basis. But some forms and ways we can do things, we
8 can do it more similar. We're trying to do
9 programmatic NEPAs and reduce cost recovery for casual
10 use. And then we're also trying to complete ten-year
11 CXs for events that are occurring and using the same
12 routes consistently.

13 And then trying to find and train lower
14 GS-level staffs to monitor these events. Like I said
15 this is a case-by-case as well. It depends on the
16 workload in the office and if we even have the
17 individuals in those offices. But we are looking to
18 do that. Something we started two years ago, Neil
19 Hamada actually started it and we're continuing it, is
20 bringing people in from different offices and training
21 them at King of the Hammers to do monitoring and know
22 what we're looking for and what to report.

23 And then on kids' races, usually that's
24 kind of what's going into cost recovery is the
25 motorcycle races. They want to do a Saturday race and

1 then a Sunday race with the kids. And so we're just
2 trying to keep those smaller, under four hours, and
3 allow volunteers to conduct the monitoring. And then
4 BLM will be in the area doing spot checks, but they
5 won't be solely committed to just that SRP. They'll
6 still be monitoring the surrounding public lands. So
7 that's where we're at with that right now.

8 And the next step is to eventually
9 develop some sort of training. And also for the
10 proponents to find a true third party to train under
11 this. So with that I'm going to go into OHV grants.
12 Those have been brought up quite a bit today as well.
13 So with the insistence of state parks, the BLM and
14 partners are able to get the following grants. You
15 can see here on the slides. We have ground
16 operations, restoration, law enforcement, education,
17 and safety.

18 So these are what was awarded for the
19 G19. You can see them broken down by office, which
20 was over five million for the Desert District alone
21 which is amazing. We really do so much work with
22 these grants across the board which hopefully allows
23 us to keep more open areas open and more protected
24 areas protected.

25 So examples of the projects that we do

1 is graffiti removal. You can see here the Palm
2 Springs Office is using it to do some trail
3 maintenance on the right side here you see on the
4 screen. Some other examples is we go out and purchase
5 kiosks, signs. Here's Barstow Field Office doing
6 education and safety. And then we bring in SCA crews
7 or ACE crews or different interns to come in and do
8 the restoration on the ground that you can see here.

9 And this is just minimal of what the
10 offices do. You know, it expands far more than what
11 I'm even able to share with you guys. Here's some
12 pamphlets and fliers that are produced with OHV funds.
13 These ones are draft now for the Palm Springs Field
14 Office. You can see that they put the OHV funds logo
15 on there, and we try to do that with anything we
16 purchase with OHV funds.

17 And this is the backside of the map.
18 So it looks really good. A lot of the offices do
19 these or just do fliers to get out to the public for
20 education. In addition, you know we have our
21 restoration grants which have been very successful I
22 would say throughout the California Desert District.
23 We actually just did, myself and Katie out of the
24 Ridgecrest, did a presentation to the division on
25 this. You can see here, you know, an illegal route

1 that the crews went out and restored.

2 I just wanted to give you an example of
3 the you know ground restoration that we've completed.
4 The district office GIS specialists have created these
5 numbers which is amazing. The types of -- you can see
6 the horizontal mulching we do. All the trash pickup.
7 When they're out there as well with collector, they're
8 able to identify tortoise burros and you know if they
9 come up at ARPA area or archeological area, they're
10 able to report that as well. Mine shafts, all that
11 stuff.

12 So not only are they out there doing
13 the work on the ground, they're also out there
14 collecting lots of data that we can use in different
15 resources within our office that just help with the
16 OHV side of things.

17 So as Randy said, congratulations to
18 the offices that did get their preliminary awards for
19 the G21. These are the numbers which is over six
20 million which is great. We were concerned that this
21 was going to be low, but the offices were very
22 successful. Restoration you can see all the offices
23 applied for a restoration grant and got it. Law
24 enforcement we usually get, those are kind of already
25 delegated for the law enforcement, so they actually

1 got more than requested. And then you can see ground
2 operations.

3 So very successful this year and now
4 it's out for a 30-day appeal period and then once
5 that's over, they can start putting in for their first
6 and second payments to start doing the work on the
7 ground.

8 So some management challenges that we
9 do see, I think proximity to you know rural areas and
10 cities that are expanding. And that seems to just be
11 getting more and more -- the public perception that
12 BLM is kind of a wasteland for their trash and stuff,
13 we are finding that that is a big concern, and it's a
14 challenge. We just don't have the manpower to go out
15 and collect all that trash.

16 Workload, that's always going to be a
17 topic. And then the BLM program funding levels,
18 staffing, turnover. I would say those are probably
19 our biggest challenges, but I do want to end on a
20 positive note with that, and say you know the
21 California Desert District is working hard to approach
22 these challenges.

23 And we're constantly working with
24 partnerships and volunteers and the public to go out
25 and do cleanups or just get out there and really

1 educate the public on you know designated trails, what
2 are open areas? You know, what are protected areas?
3 What are wilderness areas?

4 So I think that's area that we can
5 always improve on, and we are consistently trying to
6 find ways and with technology now, I think trying to
7 keep up with the younger generation is hard. But you
8 know we're working through it and we're working with
9 the State Office to come up with different ways to
10 reach people. With that being said, do you guys have
11 any questions? Go ahead, Dan.

12 MR. TAYLOR: Yeah, you talked about
13 third-party monitoring and that it was difficult or
14 challenging to get that fulfilled. Can you kind of
15 expand on why it's difficult? What is the challenges
16 for bringing in third-party monitoring for these type
17 of events?

18 MS. STEPHENSON: I think the biggest
19 challenge is the true third party. So when we did our
20 trial runs, what we found was they were family members
21 of people that were part of the race, or you know
22 wearing a shirt of that race event. You know minimal
23 things like that. But you know they're not -- are
24 they out there doing the actual monitoring that we're
25 looking for or are they playing favoritism maybe? We

1 don't know.

2 So trying to find that true third party
3 and then also developing and funding some sort of
4 training for the third party, that is both going to be
5 compliant with what BLM needs and then also you know
6 is out there protecting the spectators and the public
7 that are out there watching these events.

8 MR. TAYLOR: Yeah, I've made this
9 recommendation before because I know it's challenging
10 because some filming on federal lands would require a
11 monitor. And it doesn't happen very often because all
12 of the BLM offices I've worked with try very hard to
13 make every permit work, but I've had a few of them be
14 denied due to staffing issues of not being able to
15 monitor because there's no staffing available.

16 And I have made recommendations that
17 you know let's work with like the Wounded Warriors
18 Program or something like that. And let's get some of
19 those people trained, and of course funding is the
20 issue, to where they can step in and as a third party
21 not associated with the event that's going on whether
22 it's recreation or filming, can step in and do
23 monitoring paid for by that event if that makes sense.

24 So the challenge I think would be is
25 trying to find the funds to get the training to

1 utilize a group like that because those are workers
2 waiting for jobs I think. And I think it's something
3 we probably should try to find a way to get that
4 funded so that we can make this easier on the BLM
5 staff and on the events in general.

6 MS. STEPHENSON: Yeah. I agree with
7 you. And like I said the biggest concern is you know
8 one, and the first and foremost, is protecting the
9 public that are out there. You know spectators
10 especially on those truck races or motorcycle races
11 you know. People like to get closer and closer and
12 closer for some reason to almost want to touch it.
13 And just trying to find that group that will go out
14 there and do their due diligence and follow the
15 stipulations that we're going to put forth. That's
16 going to be the biggest challenge.

17 MANAGER ARCHULETA: You know I think
18 some of it may be a scale issue. And I think we
19 looked early at third-party monitoring for some of
20 these larger events and getting the numbers trained up
21 is not real doable on our part. And then the
22 reliability of having them all available and come
23 back. I think Dan what you're talking about seems to
24 me like it's a smaller scale and maybe shorter term
25 and maybe something more appropriate for third-party

1 monitoring.

2 MR. TAYLOR: Yeah, and I think that
3 it's something that you're going to have to just
4 build. To slowly build a database and build trained
5 people and start pulling from programs like Wounded
6 Warriors or some other similar type programs that have
7 people who are looking for ways to make a little extra
8 money here and there but are also willing to do a good
9 job if that makes sense.

10 MR. HOLLIDAY: And one of the things
11 when we had the special recreation group, they were
12 looking at that type of thing and trying to work out
13 how to generate the proper expertise I guess you'd say
14 of people to do that. And maybe that would be another
15 thing. If somebody wanted to have a special group,
16 subgroup, to look at permits and special recreation
17 permits, one portion of it would be the other
18 monitoring.

19 MS. STEPHENSON: Yeah. And it's
20 something that we could look at for, like Andrew is
21 saying, the smaller groups. But hopefully by building
22 the consistency through the Field Offices and finding
23 other ways we can avoid even going into the cost
24 recovery for some of these smaller events. And that
25 would be an idea as well. Richard, did you already

1 go?

2 MR. MITCHELL: Randy.

3 CHAIR BANIS: Well Dick already went,
4 and Billy is next.

5 MS. STEPHENSON: Okay. Go ahead.

6 MR. MITCHELL: This cost recovery, you
7 know, that King of the Hammers is right across the
8 street from me. And for two weeks straight, I mean I
9 get all that traffic up my road. Two miles across
10 state land, the other two BLM. And I've had to
11 maintain that for 23 years myself and I don't know how
12 long they've been going, maybe ten years. And that's
13 numerous vehicles.

14 It just tears it all to you know what.
15 And it all comes out of my pocket. So how do I -- do
16 I talk to Katrina and have OHV do something about
17 that? Because everybody is using it for nothing.
18 Billy is going to take care of it for everybody. And
19 I'm getting a little tired of it. I'm 73. I used to
20 do it with horses, but I got to dodge -- now.

21 MS. STEPHENSON: Yeah, I can reach out
22 to Katrina and myself and we can you know talk more on
23 a side note and see what we can do on the BLM side of
24 things to help out.

25 MR. MITCHELL: Yeah you know this King

1 guy, I mean he makes this money and brings all these
2 people. And then the local people, they've got to
3 suffer with the dirt roads. You know -- numerous of
4 them tell me about it, but I don't know if they go to
5 Katrina or who they go to. But I mean something's got
6 to be done with that.

7 When you get 18,000 people out in
8 Johnson Valley and you've got ten roads probably
9 through the dang place and mine is number one all the
10 way from Big Bear and over to Pioneer Town. It takes
11 me three hours just to do that road. Three hours in a
12 day just to get rocks out of it, drag it, and the
13 price of diesel fuel. I mean it's just getting
14 ridiculous.

15 So the more people we get doing that, I
16 think we're going to have to figure out what we're
17 going to do with them and so the ranch wouldn't have
18 to pay for it. Because I didn't bring them in here.
19 I guess if I threw a rodeo on I probably could help
20 these people do something, but you know, I don't. So
21 if you guys could solve that problem for at least one
22 of the ranchers in this industry I would appreciate
23 it. Thank you.

24 MS. STEPHENSON: I definitely think I
25 can work closely with Katrina and her Field Office to

1 try to work through some process or come up with some
2 sort of solution. Or even start the process.

3 MR. MITCHELL: Okay. Sounds good to
4 me. Thank you.

5 MS. STEPHENSON: Thank you, sir.

6 MR. MITCHELL: You bet. Thank you,
7 ma'am.

8 CHAIR BANIS: Jayne.

9 MS. POWELL: So in regards to the
10 monitors, normally when a project proponent on the
11 projects I've been involved with across California has
12 to have a monitor whether it's a Native American
13 monitor or some kind of biologist or archeologist.
14 The project proponent is part of the project cost
15 bears that. And they should have those costs written
16 into their budgets. It doesn't come down to you know
17 the agency that's issuing the permit taking care of
18 the monitoring. And it seems that unless I
19 misunderstood the paradigm here is backwards.

20 CHAIR BANIS: I think, Dana, isn't the
21 monitoring costs that we're trying to get into the
22 independent sector, those duties that have been left
23 to the BLM staff themselves.

24 MS. STEPHENSON: Correct. Yes. So
25 part of an SRP, you know they have volunteers that

1 monitor you know races and stuff. And BLM is out
2 there really to monitor the monitors, make sure
3 they're doing their job. And if they have any
4 questions or concerns they bring it to us. In
5 addition you know on some of those races we need law
6 enforcement out there to assist with our monitors.

7 MS. POWELL: Isn't all that cost
8 recoverable back to the project proponent?

9 CHAIR BANIS: Yes.

10 MS. STEPHENSON: Yes it is if it goes
11 over 50 hours. So like I said there's only one or two
12 SRPs, and this is just based on like the commercial
13 recreation permits and the competitive and stuff. I
14 mean the filming does go into that as well. I didn't
15 really dive into that. I know Andrew did.

16 But yeah, so it really is based on if
17 it goes over 50 hours and we do put it out an estimate
18 on what it will cost to continue with the permit. But
19 like I said there's only one or two of these permits
20 that actually go into a cost recovery. And they're
21 pretty large permits. I mean King of the Hammers is
22 very large. The Rebelle Rally is a cost recovery
23 permit.

24 MS. POWELL: Those two examples seem
25 like they should definitely have the project proponent

1 pay for that.

2 MS. STEPHENSON: Yeah. And they know
3 that going into it. I mean that's already expected of
4 both of them. And some of these smaller ones that are
5 going into cost recovery, that's where kind of the
6 issues lie.

7 MS. POWELL: Well maybe the approach
8 should include cost recovery for services that you
9 can't provide timely or fully cover so the --

10 MS. STEPHENSON: Yeah, I think what's
11 falling into that is some of these permitholders can't
12 afford it.

13 MS. POWELL: Well then they should plan
14 to do something else.

15 CHAIR BANIS: Again just to clarify, I
16 think that it's an attempt by permitholders to replace
17 the higher cost government labor with outside labor
18 that could be provided either less expensively or
19 perhaps for free, but by an independent third-party
20 group that could be that independent monitor function
21 that the BLM needs and is looking for out of their
22 Field Office, but not have it be their staff member.

23 MS. POWELL: Is there a way to vet that
24 list of organizations that might provide support?

25 MS. STEPHENSON: Absolutely.

1 CHAIR BANIS: And I think that's the
2 direction they're going is trying to find those
3 entities, organizations, bodies of people that could
4 qualify as being truly independent and yet still be
5 able to serve and function in a public safety and
6 resource protective way.

7 So that is the conundrum, Jayne, is
8 they haven't really found any real service that
9 provides that yet at this point. And it's only been
10 done in a pilot program, so it's a hope that it's in
11 progress. And hopefully they can find a body that can
12 do that.

13 MS. STEPHENSON: Any other questions?

14 MR. MITCHELL: I'm fine.

15 MS. STEPHENSON: Well I appreciate you
16 guys' attention. Thank you guys very much, and please
17 reach out to me with any you know future questions you
18 guys have. And I look forward to working with you all
19 in the future.

20 MR. MITCHELL: Randy, I have one
21 question. I don't know when I can bring it up. But
22 who sits on the DAC with us as far as for the Indian
23 -- I can't think of his name that was on last time we
24 were here. Do we have somebody for the tribes?

25 CHAIR BANIS: Yeah, Bob Robinson. He's

1 on the line.

2 MR. MITCHELL: Oh, okay. Okay. I'm
3 sorry. I didn't know that. Thank you.

4 CHAIR BANIS: So by the way it's funny.
5 Billy, this is how rural he is, an event that's across
6 the street is still four miles away. That's rural.

7 With that I'm going to turn it over to
8 Andrew to introduce the Manager Reports. This is our
9 favorite part of the meeting. This is when we've seen
10 seasoned veteran managers reduced to shaking and tears
11 sometimes from the grilling that my colleagues provide
12 them. So with that said, Andrew, you and your fellow
13 managers have the floor. We're looking forward to
14 this.

15 MANAGER ARCHULETA: All right. Thank
16 you, Randy. You are an intimidating group, but we'll
17 do our best here. I'm going to step us back just a
18 little bit because Billy brought up Mr. Jerry
19 Hilliard. I just wanted to say a few words about
20 Jerry.

21 When I accepted this job and they did
22 my, when they brought me into the system there, Jerry
23 was one of the first people to come and talk to me.
24 And I really appreciated that. What a great guy. So
25 there have been 12 District Managers here on the

1 California Desert District. I'm the twelfth. And
2 Jerry was the fifth one. He was in that position for
3 16 years, which to me is absolutely amazing.

4 This is a busy, busy place and it is
5 pretty intense every day from start to finish. And so
6 for somebody to be able to do that for 16 years, my
7 hat is off to them. That is an impressive man. And
8 he remained to be you know really engaged in desert
9 issues. You know he even just a few months ago I saw
10 him at different meetings. You know and a lot of
11 different meetings, it wasn't just one group. He was
12 very, very active. So what a great guy. And Billy I
13 really appreciate you reminding us about him.

14 MR. MITCHELL: Yeah, he was my first
15 District Manager I guess when I started this endeavor
16 to carry on my family's heritage. And it's funny, the
17 first tortoise battle emerged through all that, his
18 really good friends. And he's helped me with -- with
19 the right people to talk to and different things. He
20 was very instrumental for the cattlemen. I mean all
21 the industries. You know, he was very instrumental in
22 how these things turned out. Thank you.

23 MR. BAGLEY: Andrew, I'm very sorry to
24 hear of his passing. He was instrumental in the
25 California Desert Conservation Plan. We weren't

1 always on the same side, but we were always friends,
2 too. He was an excellent --

3 MR. MITCHELL: Yeah, he was.

4 MANAGER ARCHULETA: Thank you for that,
5 Jim. The other person I'd like to remember was a
6 member of our DAC, Mr. Jim Kenney. He passed away
7 this last year. Jim was pretty active with Friends of
8 the Jawbone. And I think Randy you worked pretty
9 closely with him. And I know Carl did out of
10 Ridgecrest. And I was sad to hear about his passing
11 as well.

12 In memory of him and his contribution
13 to the DAC and Friends of the Jawbone, we've got a
14 certificate that we're going to send to his wife, but
15 we also have a plaque that we're going to put up in
16 the Visitors Center at Friends of the Jawbone. So
17 yeah there's just a little bit of memory for him.

18 MR. MITCHELL: Great deal.

19 MR. BAGLEY: That's really nice. Glad
20 to see that.

21 CHAIR BANIS: We miss him at many, many
22 tables in the Ridgecrest area. He sat on many
23 different tables.

24 MANAGER ARCHULETA: I would imagine,
25 yeah. All right. With that, I'm going to move on in

1 the agenda. I don't have a PowerPoint for this. I'm
2 just going to cover a few high points about BLM
3 California, a little bit about the district, and the
4 we'll dive into the Field Manager Reports.

5 So I think everybody probably realizes
6 that our Nada Wolff Culver is our Deputy Director of
7 Policy and Program. Essentially she is our Acting
8 Director right now. Previously she was with The
9 National Autobahn Office as well as the Wilderness
10 Society. And Mike Nedd, you probably all have heard
11 Mike's name. Mike has been around for a very long
12 time. He remains our Deputy Director of Operations.

13 Here in California, Karen Mouritsen is
14 out State Director. When we did our little
15 administrative meeting a few months ago, she did a
16 welcoming. You may remember seeing her. She's our
17 State Director since January 2020. And most of you
18 know Joe Stout pretty well I would imagine. Joe is
19 our Associate State Director.

20 So I just wanted to catch you up with
21 who's who upstairs there. A little bit about CDD
22 here. Obviously, I'm the District Manager. Greg is
23 in a new role as the Associate District Manager. We
24 have two Assistant District Managers. The first one
25 is Brandon Anderson. He is the Assistant District

1 Manager for Project Support. And Brandon supervises a
2 whole crew of Project Managers that lead the charge on
3 these renewable energy projects. So he's a pretty
4 busy guy.

5 Greg vacated the position of Assistant
6 District Manager for Resources, and we just made an
7 offer in that position. So hoping to have somebody on
8 here in the new few months. So just wanted to catch
9 you up with the leadership there as well.

10 Just a little bit about our budget.
11 You have to be careful when you talk about budget, you
12 know. What's included, what's not, what does it
13 represent, what doesn't it? You know, what's in my
14 wallet doesn't necessarily represent my monthly
15 paycheck from my wife. You know those kinds of
16 things. So just these numbers with a little bit of
17 grain of salt.

18 But BLM California, this is the entire
19 state, our operating budget this year was 247 million.
20 That includes appropriations. That includes fire and
21 fuels. That includes grant money. That includes bake
22 sale money. That's the whole ball of wax there.

23 Of that, for the California Desert
24 District, we have just under \$41 million. Same thing,
25 that's that 5 million that we get from grants as well

1 as any other cost recovery money that we get through
2 these different large projects, special recreation
3 permits, all those things. So about \$41 million for
4 the Desert District. We have, across the district,
5 all the Field Offices and District employees, about
6 300 employees. So just to give you an idea about our
7 size there.

8 Like Dana mentioned, we manage just
9 under 12 million acres. We have the California Desert
10 area, that is about 11 million acres. And then we
11 have the South Coast area that's part of the Palm
12 Springs Office that adds another several hundred
13 thousand acres. So that's kind of what we look like
14 from above if you will.

15 You know I'm going to move on from
16 there. That's all I'm going to cover there. I'm
17 going to turn it over to the Field Managers. And
18 we're going to start out with hearing from them and
19 we'd love to take any questions. Actually before I
20 move on, any questions about what I just said or any
21 comments there?

22 MR. MITCHELL: No.

23 MS. POWELL: So I had a question. In
24 terms of your staffing, I was wondering how many open
25 positions you had.

1 MANAGER ARCHULETA: That's a trick
2 question. No, that's a really good question.

3 MS. POWELL: It wasn't a trick
4 question.

5 MANAGER ARCHULETA: No, it's a really
6 good one. And it's a source of my frustration. We go
7 anywhere from between 20 and 30 percent vacancy of
8 those 300 positions. Right now we're probably pushing
9 just over 30 percent vacancy. When I came on, that
10 was one of my goals to reduce that number. We got it
11 down to right around 20. Then we had a slew of
12 retirements and people moving on. And our HR program
13 lost a few employees as well, so that slowed down our
14 rehiring. So we're constantly hiring. So right now
15 we're just over 30 percent vacancy rate.

16 MS. POWELL: Thank you.

17 MANAGER ARCHULETA: Other questions?
18 All right. Let's move on. We're going to start off
19 with the Barstow Field Office, and I'll turn it over
20 to Katrina.

21 MR. MITCHELL: All right.

22 MS. SYMONS: So good afternoon. I'm
23 not going to repeat what's in the report because you
24 got that ahead of time to read. What was missing out
25 of the report I will highlight. The Field Office

1 staff continues to implement the 2019 West Mojave
2 Record of Decision. That includes conducting route
3 restoration, route signing, and monitoring as well as
4 route maintenance.

5 We're working with the National
6 Training Center at Fort Irwin on the legislative
7 environmental impact statement for the public plan
8 withdrawal extension. That draft EIS comment period
9 ended July 6th. We're anticipating to have that final
10 EIS out on the street sometime this fall.

11 We're also working on the environmental
12 analysis for the replacement of a wildlife water in
13 the Newberry Mountains Wilderness. Right now Bob
14 Burke and folks from the Bighorn Society, they're
15 hauling water on a regular basis to that site for the
16 bighorn sheep. It is hoped that with the replacement
17 of that wildlife water it will cut down on the number
18 of entries by motorized vehicle into that wilderness.

19 We're also working on the environmental
20 analysis for range improvements in the Round Mountain
21 Allotment. Those range improvements are needed before
22 we consider any changes in the actual grazing
23 rotation.

24 Shout out to the Friends of El Mirage
25 and their partnership in the operation and maintenance

1 of the El Mirage OHV Recreation Area and Visitors
2 Center. Without them given our current staffing we
3 would have an extremely hard time managing that site
4 to the quality that the Friends of El Mirage is
5 managing it.

6 We're also working on route
7 restoration. That will start probably around
8 September in the Ord Mountain subregion in accordance
9 with the Conservation Framework Agreement. This pilot
10 project is a public/private partnership with
11 Preservation Ranch.

12 And then also another partnership
13 that's in development right now is between the BLM,
14 Marines, Army, Fish and Wildlife, and the National
15 Fish and Wildlife Foundation for desert tortoise
16 conservation under the Recovery and Sustainment
17 Partnership. One of the primary conservation actions
18 that will be coming out of that will be route
19 restoration within the West Mojave planning area.

20 And then we are, you know, with all the
21 love that we're getting from new folks, you know,
22 finding the California Desert District and recreating
23 during COVID-19, they're also bringing their poor
24 behavior. So we've seen, you know, certainly an
25 increase in dumping. Every report that comes in, we

1 are logging those dumping sites and cleaning them up
2 as quickly as we can. The last site that we cleaned
3 up, and that was about a week ago, we removed 4.5 tons
4 from one site.

5 And then lastly, that's the
6 proliferation of the cannabis growth sites. Certainly
7 those growth sites are occurring primarily on private
8 land, but they're also, you know, slopping over onto
9 public lands. Whenever we wind up getting a report,
10 law enforcement does respond to that and has been
11 coordinating with other law enforcement agencies. And
12 that is it on my list. If there's any questions, I'm
13 ready to take them.

14 CHAIR BANIS: Who's first?

15 MR. BAGLEY: Randy, I've got a couple
16 questions for you. One of my questions on your Staff
17 Report, you have proposals on abandoned mine lands in
18 the Pinto Mountains southeast of Twentynine Palms.
19 That is a concern for some of the recreational miners
20 that are in this area. Can you elaborate on that a
21 little bit?

22 MS. SYMONS: Yeah, so what it is is
23 taking the adits that have been inventoried that are
24 considered a safety concern that are not being
25 currently managed by the existing mining claimant. So

1 for all of those inventoried sites that are being
2 proposed for immediation, that's basically to put
3 fencing up around it or to put gates on it to prevent
4 access by the general members of the public.

5 Letters went out to all of the mining
6 claimants basically stating, you know, "If you do not
7 correct the safety issues, BLM will. We're willing to
8 work with you to ensure that any type of corrective
9 action would not prevent you from being able to mine
10 and at the same time would also address public safety
11 concerns."

12 MR. BAGLEY: Katrina, I appreciate
13 that. My concern is, I grew up you know exploring the
14 desert. These mines were part of my backyard. As a
15 kid I'd been in every mine irresponsibly that you can
16 imagine. But I don't want to see those opportunities
17 disappear also. Part of the treasure of the public
18 lands is the ability to file an unpatented mining
19 claim. And this is an area where there's a lot of
20 active unpatented mining claims.

21 The National Park Service would like to
22 take this property back over and there are people who
23 are advocating. That would change the nature of the
24 land use experience there entirely. And anytime I
25 read about bat gates or expandable foam, I just think

1 it takes away the opportunity for people to maintain
2 these unpatented mining claims or find things in the
3 future.

4 I just remind people that minerals are
5 a commodity and the value changes from year to year.
6 And the price of gold can drive interest there, but
7 it's also part of the American dream. It's a
8 fundamental part of the American dream that you can go
9 on the public lands and file an unpatented mine claim.
10 And you have an opportunity, and I'm just concerned
11 about that.

12 So I appreciate what you're saying, and
13 I've heard some feedback from some of the local folks.
14 I call them recreational miners that are out there,
15 you know, drinking beer and dry washing and having a
16 great time on the weekends. But that's really an
17 important part of what happens out there, and I just
18 don't want to see that --

19 Another concern I have, you were
20 talking about the Johnson Valley cooperation with the
21 Marine Corps. And I'm going to raise this issue
22 again. The Marine Corps has been very inactive. We
23 call it a Shared Use Area, our acumen within the
24 aviation community.

25 There's also a special use air space

1 and the FAA has a proposal with the Marine Corps which
2 is a much larger footprint than the current open area
3 or shared use area in the Johnson Valley that create
4 the special use air space which is restricted air
5 space all the way down to the ground.

6 So I'm just going to tell you I'm also
7 the chairman of the San Bernardino County Airport
8 Commission. We administer the public airports in San
9 Bernardino County. But I'm a pilot, and this is part
10 of how the public lands are used out there also.
11 There was a huge loss when the Marine Corps took over
12 their expansion. But if this special use air space is
13 allowed to go all the way down to the ground, it's
14 going to change the nature of the public access there,
15 too.

16 Right now people fly drones. There's
17 recreational rocketry. There's ultralights. There's
18 hang-gliding. There's all kinds of activities that
19 would be totally prohibited under the special use
20 proposal. I reached out to the Marine Corps. I
21 haven't heard from them. I was once a part of the
22 DOD's operation in this, but I'm wearing a different
23 hat and I'm advocating for public access to the public
24 lands.

25 I know the Bureau of Land Management

1 only administers the footprint of what's on the
2 ground, but this special use air space is a real
3 danger to what happens there. And I'm just going to
4 throw this out because I want people to hear this. If
5 you would have asked me 20 years ago if the Marine
6 Corps could take over that Johnson Valley expansion, I
7 would have told you it was just unthinkable.

8 But it happened, and my concern now, if
9 you get special use air space from the Marine Corps
10 all the way down to the surface, they're not in the
11 recreation business. And they may come in the future
12 and say, "Hey, we can't use this shared use air space.
13 We're already on the air space. Why don't we do
14 another change?" And it's going to be a major change
15 for the people who live out there and also for the
16 people who recreate.

17 So I'm just putting it up on the radar
18 screen, it's a concern for me. And I know it's beyond
19 the jurisdiction of the Bureau of Land Management, but
20 I think we need to have this discussion here so people
21 are aware of it, especially users groups. And I'm
22 disappointed we don't have more participation today
23 because I really do think this a threat to the ongoing
24 public access to the Johnson Valley. That's pretty
25 much what I have.

1 CHAIR BANIS: Oh I've got Dan with
2 their hand up and then Billy.

3 MR. TAYLOR: Thank you, Jim. I want to
4 echo Jim's concern about that air space. This is the
5 first I've heard about it. Thank you, Jim. Because
6 that would adversely impact the film industry in
7 Johnson Valley who likes to use drones and helicopters
8 in that area for some of their filming because of the
9 open landscape with no structures in it.

10 It's one of the last few vestiges of
11 open land out there that they can film on without
12 having anything around it. So that does concern me.
13 And I would like to talk to you, Jim, on the side
14 about that later.

15 Katrina, you're so much fun to work
16 with. I tell you, you're a blast. But you know I'm a
17 one-trick pony, I'm always talking about filming. I
18 have a question about the Dumont Dunes access road
19 project. Is there any possible way that the Dumont
20 Dunes access road could be in this improvement be
21 included into the filming area that's already
22 established around Dumont? As you know that access
23 road is outside of the filming area. Is there a way
24 to be able to, in this improvement, get that added
25 into the filming area?

1 MS. SYMONS: So the actual
2 environmental document was pulled together by the
3 Federal Highway Administration underneath their
4 authority because that's where the funding is coming
5 from. So it is really specific to the access road.
6 With that being said, you know, the Field Office does
7 have the ability to add areas to be available for
8 filming. So I would certainly entertain doing just
9 that.

10 MR. TAYLOR: Yeah because I do get a
11 lot of requests for that access road because of the
12 way it looks and how well it's maintained for the most
13 part. It would be great to be able to include that in
14 the future.

15 I know you have nothing to do with this
16 in the Johnson Valley side, the Discover Johnson
17 Valley app, that was sponsored mostly by the military
18 if I remember correctly. And it went away. That was
19 actually a very good resource I think for the
20 recreation and for filming.

21 And I really wish there was a way to
22 talk to the military or give them some encouragement
23 to be able to reinstate that app because it was very
24 useful, and it helped a lot with film crews trying to
25 make sure they're staying where they're supposed to be

1 and not encroaching onto areas that are not open for
2 filming or into private land. That's just a
3 statement, not a question.

4 All of your energy projects you have,
5 the sunbaked and Cady [ph] Solar Project, everything
6 else you have going on. I'm going through your list
7 here real quick that I've made notes on. But any one
8 of those energy programs, when that went through, did
9 you include in the studies and the AEA and everything
10 to prepare for those programs to come in, did you
11 include filming in those studies so that once they
12 become active it will be easier for a film crew to be
13 able to come in and with permission of those energy
14 companies film in those areas?

15 MS. SYMONS: So sunbaked and Cady Solar
16 Energy, we've only had the one preapplication meeting,
17 so we're not even close to the time for doing the
18 environmental documentation for that. And so
19 certainly, you know, given the comments you not only
20 made today but in past back presentations, the
21 consideration of filming can certainly be part of
22 that.

23 In regard to the wind testing project,
24 we're going to be covering that via categorical
25 exclusion. We can do the same thing when it comes to

1 a film permit, so I don't see that being as
2 troublesome as the solar projects which will at a
3 minimum require an EA.

4 MR. TAYLOR: Beautiful. Thank you,
5 Katrina. As always, it's a joy to work with you. You
6 are always willing to listen. You're always willing
7 to see every avenue that would be the best work for,
8 in my opinion, for any kind of use on the land. You
9 try to make things successful, so I appreciate your
10 hard work. And thank you and continue to do so.

11 MS. SYMONS: Thanks, Dan. I appreciate
12 the Inland Empire Film Services. Without your
13 assistance, we would not be able to service the film
14 industry like we do. So kudos to you and your
15 organization.

16 CHAIR BANIS: Next on the line is
17 Billy. You're on mute, Billy.

18 MR. MITCHELL: Does it work now?

19 CHAIR BANIS: Got you. Sounds good.

20 MR. MITCHELL: I'm good?

21 CHAIR BANIS: You got it.

22 MR. MITCHELL: It's probably better I
23 was on mute, huh? Hi, Katrina. On the Round
24 Mountain, we're waiting on what now you said?

25 MS. SYMONS: We have to get the

1 environmental assessment completed for those range
2 improvements. We're running into a little difficulty.
3 I do have some of my staff, that would be the field-
4 oriented staff, to collect some additional
5 information. They're on fire assignment right now.

6 And then we're still trying to fill the
7 vacancy of the Vice Freitag [ph]. We do see some
8 movement on the potential of getting that vacancy
9 flown here in the next month or so. So it's a
10 capacity issue right now, but it is absolutely on the
11 top of our list to get done. We know how important it
12 is to John.

13 MR. MITCHELL: Yeah. We've been
14 working on that for over 15 years, and you see these
15 other mines go in, you see all different stuff go in.
16 And this has been kicked aside, other than you. And
17 it's really disturbing that you can watch all of this
18 other stuff get done, but when it comes down to the
19 ranching industry, which in the Mojave Desert was the
20 biggest industry, now you've got six people left and
21 it just doesn't seem like anything gets done when we
22 wanted.

23 But on the same line I have to say that
24 you're the only Area Manager other than Jerry Hillard
25 that's really worked with the cattle industry. You've

1 done an excellent job. Lindsey, she was excellent.
2 It's going to be hard for anybody to take that girl's
3 place as much as she got done. So being that's all
4 done, as soon as we get John's, then are we going to
5 the Rattlesnake extension for me was the second
6 question.

7 MS. SYMONS: Yep. That's the next one.

8 MR. MITCHELL: It's not going to take
9 15 years. I don't think I have 15 years left. I'll
10 be 90-something by then. All right. Thank you,
11 Katrina. I appreciate it, and you know all the rest
12 of the ranchers do, too.

13 MR. ROBINSON: This is Bob Robinson. I
14 would like to put up my hand. I'm on the phone.

15 CHAIR BANIS: Hi, Bob. Perfect timing.
16 The floor is yours.

17 MR. ROBINSON: I was just going to
18 comment on the Calico Early Man Site. I've never been
19 there. I don't know exactly what's involved with
20 restoring the property, but I would like to express
21 desire that whoever the contractor is that they employ
22 a culturally affiliated Native American monitor to be
23 onsite for the ground-disturbing activities there.
24 And I think that would be an important -- because
25 that's an absolutely significant and culturally

1 significant area.

2 MS. SYMONS: I hear you, Bob. I've
3 also, the Morongo Band of Mission Indians has also
4 expressed a desire to be onsite during that work as
5 well.

6 MR. ROBINSON: Yeah, it's also in our
7 tribal area. That's why --

8 MR. BAGLEY: I'm glad to see there's a
9 plan for ongoing interpretive sites there, too. I
10 think it's a really significant cultural resource. So
11 I'm really glad to hear that. I don't want it just to
12 be backfield and forgotten.

13 MR. ROBINSON: And another thing is, I
14 don't know what the triage or what that information
15 is, but that information needs to be -- the tribes
16 maybe need some input on what's included in that also.

17 MS. SYMONS: So are you volunteering?

18 MR. ROBINSON: What?

19 MS. SYMONS: Are you volunteering?

20 MR. ROBINSON: Yes, I would be willing
21 to do that, yeah.

22 MS. SYMONS: Okay. Perfect.

23 MR. ROBINSON: Anne Bryerty [ph] is
24 already involved, right?

25 MS. SYMONS: Yep, she sure is.

1 MR. ROBINSON: Yeah.

2 MS. SYMONS: I'll make sure to loop Jim
3 Shearer in on this, Bob. And he'll be reaching out.

4 MR. ROBINSON: Okay. Thank you.

5 CHAIR BANIS: Any other questions for
6 Katrina?

7 MR. MITCHELL: Not from me. She does a
8 heck of a good job.

9 MR. BAGLEY: Thank you, Katrina.

10 CHAIR BANIS: Congratulations to Chris
11 Otahal and the bulls for their national recognition
12 from the national office. That was nice to see.
13 Andrew, your next guest?

14 MANAGER ARCHULETA: Thank you Katrina
15 for that great report. We're going to move down to El
16 Centro and Ryan Chatterton.

17 MR. CHATTERTON: Thanks, Andrew.
18 Grateful for this opportunity to address all of you on
19 some of the projects that we have going on. Like
20 Katrina had mentioned, I don't plan on touching too
21 much on the projects that are already within the
22 report that you received; however, happy to take any
23 questions that you have on those projects that are
24 listed on that report.

25 I do just want to add a little bit on

1 the Salton Sea Management Program that Andrew
2 discussed earlier that El Centro Field Office is
3 taking the lead on. We do have a project that we are
4 currently in the implementation phase for. It's the
5 Salton Sea Species Conservation Habitat Project.

6 This was habitat ponds as well as dust
7 and other suppression projects that were in the early
8 study phases as the Department of Water Resources and
9 the State of California were looking for ways to
10 approach some of the human health and safety issues
11 that are out there associated with the dust that needs
12 to be addressed as well as the shrinking habitat for a
13 number of species that are out there.

14 The Salt and Sea Species Conservation
15 Habitat Project covers 3,770 acres along the southern
16 edge of the Salton Sea, of which 480 acres are BLM-
17 administered public lands. In early 2021, in January,
18 the BLM issued its notice to proceed to the DWR for
19 the construction phases associated with this project.
20 And that will consist of three shallow habitat pond
21 units, the development of associated water delivery
22 systems, and pump stations as well as intake diversion
23 gateways and gravity-fed structures. That work is
24 currently ongoing out there.

25 Also touched base a little bit on the

1 Truckhaven geothermal lease area earlier in our
2 meeting today. I do have just one further update on
3 that project. The proponent is tentatively scheduled
4 to drill the first geothermal exploration well
5 actually this coming September, so next month. So
6 some progress there in moving forward with some of
7 that geothermal exploration that is occurring out
8 there.

9 I do want to talk just briefly on the
10 Imperial Sand Dunes and some of the great work that is
11 happening out there and then also address some of the
12 visitation that we've seen.

13 So as noted, we did see an increase in
14 visitation over this last year. The numbers support
15 showing that it was about a 20 percent increase with
16 total visitation for the Imperial Sand Dunes recorded
17 at 1,122,937. So we haven't seen visitation numbers
18 this large since our 2013 season.

19 And so with that increase, we also did
20 see an increase in our EMS and Search and Rescue
21 incidents out there. A total of 448 medical and
22 rescue calls during the 2020/2021 off-highway vehicle
23 season. That represented a 42 percent increase in
24 calls compared to the previous season.

25 Of those calls, 198 were treated and

1 released in the field; 62 were search and rescue
2 operations; 184 medical transports with 94 going by
3 ground ambulance to local hospitals; and 90 by air
4 ambulance to trauma centers. And unfortunately 4 were
5 fatal throughout the season.

6 So the increase in call volume is a
7 direct correlation there to the increase in
8 visitation. As well certainly we are seeing new
9 visitors that have not been out to the Dunes
10 previously. It's been a common theme that I've heard
11 from our law enforcement officers that are out working
12 in those areas that they may not even be aware of some
13 of the simple basic rules associated with keeping them
14 safe while they're out there recreating in those
15 areas.

16 We continue to partner with many
17 organizations to help augment our staffing, especially
18 during busy holiday event season. We have a
19 partnership with our BLM Alaska Fire Service where we
20 actually head up during our off season to provide
21 training to their Alaska Fire Crew. And in turn while
22 their fire season is running slow and we're down here
23 in the desert during our warmer winter months, they
24 come down and help augment our Search and Rescue staff
25 to provide some of those emergency services there.

1 We also with Imperial County EMS, the
2 U.S. Border Patrol, their BORSTAR teams to help
3 augment and provide those services. U.S. Forest
4 Service, the Imperial County Sheriff's Office, and
5 then of course all of the air ambulance services that
6 are in the area here.

7 We are doing some hiring getting ready
8 for the upcoming season, which you know is expected to
9 begin on October 15th, so not long after our next DAC
10 meeting there in the area. And then one last thing to
11 report out on and then I'll take some questions if you
12 have them for me.

13 We are working through the process of
14 doing a five-year implementation review for both our
15 Eastern San Diego Resource Management Plan as well as
16 the Imperial Sand Dunes Recreation Area Management
17 Plan. During this five-year review, we will be
18 evaluating the following: Implementing, tracking, and
19 documenting the implementation of the Land Use Plan
20 decisions; collecting data and information to
21 determine if the plan's desired outcomes, those goals
22 and objectives, are being met; and to determine
23 whether the Land Use Plan's decisions continue to be
24 correct and proper, the proper decision over time.

25 So we're looking at having that review

1 completed within this fiscal year 2021. With that,
2 I'll open it up to any questions that you have for me.

3 CHAIR BANIS: Dan, I see you've got
4 your hand raised first.

5 MR. TAYLOR: Like I said, I'm a one
6 trick pony, so guess what I'm going to ask about. The
7 East Mesa Solar and the green hydrogen facility
8 proposal, it looks like you haven't even gotten to the
9 NEPA part of it yet, but I would like to encourage
10 that when you do get to that, just include filming in
11 it so that when that's done, or if it's approved, it's
12 open for filming.

13 But I do have a staffing question. I
14 have seen some film permits not get approved or denied
15 due to issues with the short staff being able to get
16 the work done in a timely manner. And I've been told
17 that some film permits are going to be like a 30-day
18 turn, which as you know in the film industry, that's
19 tantamount to saying, "We don't want you."

20 So is there anything, and this may be
21 an Andrew Archuleta question, what have you been doing
22 to try to fill those holes, which I know is a big
23 challenge, to be able to bring the filming back up to
24 a processing time that would be more conducive to what
25 the film industry is able to do when they want to

1 shoot out at Glamis or any of those other areas that
2 you have open for filming?

3 MR. CHATTERTON: Appreciate that
4 question, Dan. I will take a stab at answering that.
5 Currently we've been working with our recreation staff
6 to help augment and process these film permits.
7 Typically these are an action that is processed by our
8 land staff, and we have actually put forward an
9 additional position for our office in this last year
10 that was approved.

11 And we are working on hiring that
12 position and are just waiting for a start date for
13 that person to come on board and to help augment. I
14 do see this as an opportunity to help advance and move
15 potentially these film permits through the process a
16 bit faster and probably take on some additional
17 workload associated with that. So certainly mindful
18 of that need, and we have made some moves to address
19 that and are working on bringing that additional
20 realty specialist now.

21 MR. TAYLOR: That's great to hear.
22 Thank you so much, Ryan because I know the local
23 community out there has really been hurt by COVID
24 economically. And the more we're able to bring some
25 film crews in there to stay in the hotels, eat in the

1 restaurants, shop in their shops while they're out
2 there, the better it is for the local community out
3 there. So I'm glad to hear there's movement trying to
4 make that a little bit easier.

5 CHAIR BANIS: Thanks, Dan. Jayne,
6 would you like the floor?

7 MS. POWELL: I would. So my question
8 is about the American Girl and the Padre Y Madre heap
9 leach sites and the exploratory drilling that is
10 reported for the SMP Gold Corp Exploratory Plan of
11 Operations. And I wanted to ask Ryan, are they doing
12 drilling through the liners under those old heap leach
13 sites? Is that what's going on?

14 MR. CHATTERTON: No, the focus of the
15 drilling is just the heap leach material itself. They
16 are interested in finding out if there is still a
17 resource there within those heap leach piles to mine.

18 MS. POWELL: So they're not going all
19 the way to the liner that's under.

20 MR. CHATTERTON: Correct.

21 MS. POWELL: Okay. And then on the
22 green hydrogen facility, so that is still in the
23 planning stage it looks like quite a ways down the
24 road. Is that correct?

25 MR. CHATTERTON: That is correct. We

1 still have not accepted an application from the
2 proponent. We are working on providing them comments
3 on a plan of development that we receive. And so
4 still very early on in the stages there and working
5 towards what we call a second preapplication meeting
6 where we will be able to invite some of the consulting
7 parties to provide comments on what they plan to
8 develop out there.

9 MS. POWELL: Okay. And last question,
10 on your staffing situation. So how much
11 interdependency is still going on between the Palm
12 Springs and the El Centro Field Offices in terms of
13 sharing like a single resource? Are you guys trying
14 to fully staff El Centro?

15 MR. CHATTERTON: The goal has always
16 been to work towards fully staffing El Centro. We
17 have had an extended vacancy with an archeologist
18 position for our office and have been leaning on not
19 only the Palm Springs Field Office but have received
20 support from almost every office that we have here in
21 the California Desert District to help support.

22 I am happy to report that we have a
23 start date for our archeologist coming on August 29th
24 if I remember that date correct. So looking forward
25 to that. And with that that would fill our table of

1 organization in terms of those core resource positions
2 to process these actions through.

3 MS. POWELL: That's good. Thank you.

4 CHAIR BANIS: Any other takers?

5 MR. STOVIN: Yeah, I'd like to ask Ryan
6 a question.

7 CHAIR BANIS: You got it.

8 MR. STOVIN: Ryan, on the five-year
9 review for the East San Diego County Plan, would that
10 allow any route designations?

11 MR. CHATTERTON: No, that would require
12 an additional planning effort in order to designate
13 any further routes associated with that. But
14 certainly we would be looking any implementation
15 decisions that were associated with our current route
16 network to see if those decisions are still applicable
17 or if there is a need to make a note of that for
18 future planning efforts.

19 MR. STOVIN: Okay. Thanks.

20 CHAIR BANIS: May I ask, where are you
21 on the Vinagre Wash route planning resulting from the
22 Dingell Act?

23 MR. CHATTERTON: Sure, absolutely. So
24 in late spring we did have an organization from one of
25 the camps along the river, Walters Camp if I remember

1 the name correctly submit a number of routes that they
2 would like the Bureau of Land Management to consider
3 adding to the route network that is out there. So we
4 are in the early stages of taking a look at those
5 routes.

6 There has not been a planning effort
7 initiated associated with it, however we continue to
8 work through the implementation of the Dingell Act
9 with assigning the routes that were congressionally
10 designated associated that act as well as completion
11 of the cultural surveys that are required in that act
12 as well.

13 CHAIR BANIS: Terrific. I'm very happy
14 to hear it's the folks from Walters Camp you're
15 working with. Glad to hear that. Thank you. Other
16 questions? Andrew, should be throw it to Mike at
17 Needles now?

18 MANAGER ARCHULETA: Yeah, let's move up
19 north to Mike. Needles Field Office is geographically
20 one of the largest in the BLM. So Mike, take it over.

21 MR. AHRENS: All right. Thank you very
22 much. Happy to be here again. So I did actually want
23 to touch on some of the items that I had in my written
24 report because frankly things aren't static, and
25 they've already changed.

1 We reported on the FAA Communications
2 site, which the FAA decided was no longer needed and
3 wanted to close it up and relinquish their right-of-
4 way. So we've worked with them to, you know, properly
5 understand what they need to do to restore the site,
6 removing, you know, foundations and some of the other
7 gravel and recontouring of the site. And we've
8 completed the NEPA analysis on that and so they're
9 fully authorized now to do that. And that site should
10 get restored and put away here in the very near
11 future.

12 Also want to touch just a little bit on
13 the Castle Mountain mine. I don't know if we
14 indicated in our report or not, they do anticipate an
15 expansion proposal likely next year. And so in the
16 process of getting ready for that proposal they're
17 looking at exploring for water sources frankly because
18 they know the new proposal will require more water.
19 And so we're working with them right now, test wells,
20 both on the mine site and another actually on private
21 land in Nipton. So that's progressing well, and we
22 think that will be wrapped up and they're hoping to be
23 moving on those wells this September.

24 And then maybe it's redundant,
25 everybody might already know this, but we're really

1 proud that the portion of Route 66 between Needles and
2 Barstow was recently designated as a National Scenic
3 Byway. Really excited about that. It's already
4 starting to bring some good news to the area.

5 The Barstow office is actually going to
6 be doing a celebration within their DDC, the Desert
7 Discovery Center as part of the monument is working
8 with that. So that I think is happening November 6th,
9 I believe I got the date right. Pending still COVID
10 restrictions and what have you so stay tuned for that.
11 You'll all be getting invitations to that as it's
12 going along there.

13 And then I learned just yesterday that
14 California Historic Route 66 Association was working
15 with the private property owners at the Roadrunner
16 Retreat along Route 66 to gain a National Park Service
17 grant to do some restoration and revitalization of
18 that site. And they were awarded that grant, or
19 learned they were going to be awarded it yesterday.

20 So that grant will let them start the
21 planning for that restoration and rehabilitation of
22 the site. One of their first goals is actually to
23 rebuild that Roadrunner Retreat neon sign that if
24 you've been on Route 66 in that area you've seen.
25 It's one of the favorite photo stops for tourists

1 along Route 66. So real excited about that.

2 Also Amboy Trail was recently
3 designated as a National Recreation Trail. Again
4 super proud of that. We had actually done a trail
5 reroute there as well trying to take some of the
6 steepness out of the last bit of that hike up onto the
7 rim. And it was about a 40 percent incline on that
8 trail, and we've got it stretched out and brought it
9 down to about a more reasonable 12 percent incline.
10 So that's going really well.

11 Amboy like everywhere else is getting a
12 lot of use this year I think both because of COVID and
13 people looking for other things that they can do
14 outside and also because it's a monument and more
15 people are thinking about it. We also were the
16 benefactors of a couple of Los Angeles Times articles
17 identifying the Amboy Trail as one of the top, I think
18 it was Top 50 Trails in California. So it drove our
19 use up a bunch there as well.

20 Along with that use which is great has
21 come other associated impacts, off-road parking,
22 driving, things like that. So we're working to try to
23 harden that a little bit more and position ourselves
24 to better protect the site and manage that.

25 And we're also working on a concept

1 design right now which we'll keep you informed as we
2 move along, but to actually add some additional trails
3 in the area just to use some more. So pretty excited
4 about how all of that is going.

5 And then as you may be aware there's a
6 new emphasis on the planning for the Mojave Trails
7 National Monument. We're starting to again in the
8 real preliminary pre-plan kind of phase, but lining up
9 some budget and some IDT, Interdisciplinary Team and
10 Staffing and working on a communication plan to help
11 us work both internally because there's three or four
12 offices actually involved in this planning effort.

13 And then of course the external
14 communications as well. So hard at work on that.
15 You'll see some movement on that before the end of the
16 year I'm sure. We actually are talking about
17 potentially doing some webinars to actually bring the
18 public together, talk about different aspects of the
19 plan and get early feedback even before we start with
20 the alternative and formal scoping even. So stay
21 tuned for that.

22 And then of course finally we're very
23 hopeful that the Advisory Council will establish a
24 subgroup. One was called for in the proclamation and
25 we look forward to working with you all on that level.

1 And I guess that's probably where I want to stop for
2 now. So if there's questions, I'm very available.

3 CHAIR BANIS: Who's up first? Dan?

4 MR. TAYLOR: Billy, you can go ahead
5 first. I've got to gather my thoughts real quick.

6 MR. MITCHELL: I have that trouble all
7 the time. Yeah Mike, what's the status on the corrals
8 we're going to get put back? Where are we at on that?

9 MR. AHRENS: Yeah there's been a bit of
10 a lull run as you probably know. We got pretty
11 distracted during the 2020, his other businesses,
12 struggling with those. And then as you know we lost
13 Jenna, our Range Management Specialist right about the
14 same time Lindsey left Barstow.

15 So the vacancies are hard to overcome.
16 So we've bought a lot of those materials. We've done
17 most of the planning. There's a few details about how
18 to move water up to the site that we're working with
19 Ron on. And hope to get back into that in more depth
20 here really soon. Certainly once we replace Jenna
21 which we're working on right now. That announcement
22 will be going out in just a couple weeks. So making
23 good progress there.

24 MR. MITCHELL: Well that's good. I'm
25 glad you're putting them back together. It's taken a

1 long time on that one, too.

2 MR. AHRENS: It has. It has.

3 MR. MITCHELL: Thanks, Mike.

4 MR. AHRENS: Yep.

5 CHAIR BANIS: You got it, Dan.

6 MR. TAYLOR: The Ivanpah Solar Energy
7 Grant and Hardship Request, I just wish filming was
8 added in that because I had a number of requests to
9 shoot there, but because the EA wasn't done for
10 filming there, they couldn't help out that program.
11 But I do have a question about what you're going to be
12 doing with the Ivanpah Windsailing Recreation
13 Management, the SRMA. Can you tell me a little bit
14 more about that? That's on the Ivanpah dry lake,
15 right?

16 MR. AHRENS: Correct. That's correct.
17 Yeah and so essentially we're looking at a recreation
18 activity plan. We'd like to alter the primary access
19 to get more of the vehicles off of the lakebed and
20 give them a more substantial road there. We need to
21 secure some of the perimeter in particular over by
22 Yates Well Road.

23 We have a regular problem where when
24 the 15 Freeway backs up whether that be going north or
25 south, people will be peeling off the freeway and

1 racing across the dry lake as a shortcut. And of
2 course again vehicles are prohibited on the lakebed
3 because we're trying to protect it for the surface
4 there for the land sailors.

5 And then we actually want to formally
6 designate some staging areas and kind of camping areas
7 and what have you. And we want to look at film for
8 the Ivanpah Recreation Area.

9 MR. TAYLOR: Yeah well it is a
10 requested area every once in a while asking about the
11 lakebed. But I do agree that we've got to try and
12 figure out how to keep some of the vehicles off of
13 that to protect it because you know it is a perfect
14 area for that windsailing. It's got the right wind
15 patterns and it just seems to work really well. So
16 I'm all for trying to make that work.

17 The Amboy Trail reroute, the last I
18 spoke with your office about this, I was told the only
19 place open for filming is the parking lot. Now that
20 was 10 or 15 years ago, and I haven't had a request
21 since because the industry has just assumed that Amboy
22 Crater is not really open for filming. That reroute,
23 is there any way where at least they can film on that
24 trail or be able to add in a stipulation that that's
25 open besides the parking lot? Because the parking lot

1 is really not the place they want to film.

2 MR. AHRENS: I'm not entirely sure
3 that's actually true. Maybe I'd have to go back and
4 look, but I think actually we've authorized some small
5 film projects you know away from the parking lot out
6 into the lava flow and what have you. Of course
7 there's no vehicle use out beyond the parking lot.
8 And the previous environmental work, which is a little
9 old, didn't specifically include film so we have to do
10 some work up front for whatever the project is. But
11 especially for the smaller kind of film things,
12 there's no reason that we couldn't consider that.

13 MR. TAYLOR: Okay. Great. Thank you.
14 I'll try and make sure the industry understands that
15 it's a little more flexible than what I was informed
16 in the past. And I'm glad to hear that it's probably
17 not as accurate as I thought it would be. So thank
18 you very much.

19 MR. AHRENS: You're welcome.

20 CHAIR BANIS: Dick, you're up. Good to
21 see you again.

22 MR. HOLLIDAY: I just had one question
23 about, I was reading your thing about the Ivanpah
24 Solar Hardship Request. What was their hardship?

25 MR. AHRENS: So they talked a little

1 bit about it this morning. I think maybe Andrew did.
2 I forget who exactly. It was Greg. There was a
3 previous or actually current regulations that sets the
4 rents for the solar plants and what have you. They're
5 based on this price index of rural lands and what have
6 you. That's updated every five years.

7 San Bernardino County in particular,
8 the rates, when they went I think it was a couple
9 hundred percent increase in rental value. So they
10 weren't prepared for that when that change occurred.
11 Also we've had some changes in the way we charge for
12 megawatt capacities. And the plant isn't necessarily
13 producing absolutely at what they hoped they would do.
14 And I think there was actually a problem with the
15 power purchase agreement. So all of those things led
16 them to request a hardship.

17 MR. HOLLIDAY: Yeah I'm sure they
18 haven't been making as much as they thought they
19 would. Thank you.

20 MR. AHRENS: You're welcome.

21 CHAIR BANIS: Other questions for Mike?
22 Just congratulations on the National Recreation Trail
23 Status for Amboy Crater. I just want folks to know,
24 you know out of the 20,000 miles of designated roads,
25 trails, horse trails, bike trails, you name it,

1 there's only two National Recreation Trails in the
2 California Desert. So very interesting. I think many
3 of us feel there's a lot more that could qualify, but
4 good work on that.

5 MR. AHRENS: Thank you very much.

6 CHAIR BANIS: Let's see. Andrew, would
7 you like to introduce your newest Field Manager over
8 there in Palm Springs area?

9 MANAGER ARCHULETA: You bet. Thank you
10 Mike for all of that information. Move over to Palm
11 Springs South Coast. And Tim Gilloon, our newest
12 Field Manager came to us from Colorado and the Forest
13 Service. We won't hold that against him. He's doing
14 a great job so far and on a fast learning curve. So
15 turn it over to you, Tim.

16 MR. GILLOON: Thank you, Andrew. I
17 appreciate it. And yeah, it's the old phrase
18 "drinking from a firehose" certainly applies here in
19 the desert and this particular Field Office. Randy I
20 think what we should do is based on your reference for
21 giving Field Managers a hard time, we can go ahead and
22 see about having this added to the Sears School
23 Curriculum and see if people can handle it out in the
24 middle of the desert if anybody gets that reference.

25 What I'd like to do is, I'm not going

1 to be as read-in as Mike and Ryan and Katrina are on
2 the details of many of the projects. So I will take
3 this time primarily to cover a couple of gaps that
4 were not listed in our report. And going through,
5 just with the volume of work that we have on the Palm
6 Springs South Coast docket, I may want to try and
7 provide more materials and details separate to the
8 report upon request just because we've got a large
9 volume of work as you know.

10 And again on the intro part of it, just
11 to let you know a little bit about me. I laid out my
12 leadership principals to my staff, and that is
13 transparency, teamwork, and ownership. And everything
14 we do kind of falls under there.

15 And that transparency I see is part
16 communication, both internally and externally. So as
17 we continue to work and develop these relationships I
18 do intend to make our workload and our projects as
19 transparent as possible. Of course, you know,
20 standard laws and regulations apply for various things
21 that have to be confidential or internal deliberation
22 type stuff. But I do want to emphasize I will be
23 transparent with anybody who has further questions on
24 what we're doing and certain projects.

25 Currently Jayne also vacancy bug has

1 struck the Palm Springs South Coast because we're
2 looking at about 25 percent for our 45 positions. And
3 unfortunately a couple of them are key leadership
4 positions over the last couple of months, and that's
5 two Assistant Field Managers and one of my law
6 enforcement supervisory positions. So that presents
7 some communication management challenges over the last
8 couple of months. And like I said I've been here for
9 a short while, but we're just trying to plug the gaps.

10 When we bring on a couple people and
11 try to fill those, that's going to improve our
12 communications internally and externally. And so with
13 that I'm also taking a chance to reset with our
14 overall strategy and partnerships with everybody in
15 terms of our priorities.

16 So let me go ahead and cover some of
17 the things. So in the DAC report you can see various
18 projects. We didn't get through all of the program
19 areas. I'll probably revisit how we present the
20 various projects and what we have going on, but
21 there's 14 major right-of-way projects listed in that
22 DAC report. We've got five projects in the Land Use
23 Reports, five for Natural Cultural Resource, two for
24 Monument Planning, and then a whole host of other
25 things.

1 Just a note there, there's 18 EAs that
2 are on our docket in various stages and that covers a
3 lot of things for community projects, transportation,
4 water systems, restoration. You name it, it's on
5 there. So there's a lot of stuff that's just not
6 included. But I'm going to hit on a couple of
7 highlights that I think are worth mentioning.

8 One of those is going to be in the
9 report they do mention the agents of discovery. I do
10 want to call that one out specifically. And then
11 something new that came up just this last week that
12 we're trying to solidify plans for some folks might
13 feel if you're in the Coachella Valley area. The
14 Capitol Christmas tree this year is coming out of the
15 Six Rivers National Forest in Northern California.

16 And it is planning on making a stop
17 here in the Coachella Valley at the Santa Rosa San
18 Jocinta Mountains National Monument Visitors Center.
19 And that should be estimated for the morning of
20 November 7th. So this is early stages. We haven't
21 even gotten the planning guide, so there's going to be
22 a lot of logistics for that event we have to consider.
23 But some good news there and of course and a former
24 Forest Service guy, I like that as well.

25 Again as you know the main focus for us

1 is renewable energy projects. So again we've got a
2 majority of that is supporting the current
3 administration goals, and we've got solar and wind.
4 Plenty in operation, plenty under construction, and
5 there's going to be more that are going to be coming
6 in.

7 Of note that's not included in the
8 report, I mean there's details about Arica and Victory
9 Pass and Oberon, but just yesterday the press release
10 came out from the Department of Interior level letting
11 you know that we've released a draft EA for two of
12 those projects and we should be releasing another one
13 here shortly for Oberon. And again the big challenge
14 is how do we balance this workload with all of the
15 other stuff that we have spanning from the entire
16 state of California?

17 One thing I'd like to highlight is the
18 Whitewater River Comprehensive River Management Plan.
19 So that based on the Dingell Act designation as a wild
20 and scenic river. We are not the lead planning
21 agency, but we are providing personnel as part of the
22 ID team Forest Service. San Bernardino National
23 Forest is going to be leading that.

24 And right now they were slated starting
25 next weekend to go up and start doing some data

1 collection for record use, but we were able to
2 convince and talk to the contractor doing that. This
3 isn't a peak use time in our areas for that, so
4 they're going to be moving that to about October or
5 November timeframe. I just got a notice that I was
6 having unstable connection, so bear with me if my
7 video or audio cuts out.

8 I'd like to cover the Sand to Snow
9 National Monument Planning Effort. This one also with
10 also San Bernardino National Forest and the Forest
11 Service. We are the lead on this particular project,
12 so we've submitted a draft preparation plan. We've
13 identified our IDT members both on the BLM and the
14 Forest Service side. We're working through that. And
15 right now we're at the stage where we need to start
16 developing that statement of work. So once FY '22
17 comes around, we anticipate getting some funding to be
18 able to buy towards that and we'll start the planning
19 efforts at that time in more detail.

20 The grant program, I won't say a lot
21 about this because Dana covered a lot of it in really
22 good efforts there. And the signage piece and the
23 patrolling that our folks are out there doing to
24 utilize those funds to the ground. I do want to call
25 out, for FY '21 -- virtual connectivity disruption --

1 emphasizing that we've leveraged funds and we've
2 increased that leverage from, at least in our office,
3 from -- bringing in for every dollar that we kick, the
4 state has kicked in five. So that's pretty good
5 there.

6 And then also the work that our staff
7 is doing to help benefit the Park Service, our sister
8 agency with the Joshua Tree, that new Yamaha grant.
9 So pretty good work that they're doing there as well.

10 And then working with our law
11 enforcement agencies, you know they're working with
12 over 20 different agencies on the federal side, county
13 side, and local municipal police. They're doing a lot
14 of good work there and we're also sending out some of
15 our law enforcement agents to help out with these
16 other projects like the camp project for the marijuana
17 piece. And they're also helping other rec programs
18 focusing on Sky Valley and doing some cleanup in
19 dumping.

20 I think my notes for Steele Valley were
21 in the nature of 43 tons that they helped identify
22 that need to get cleaned out of there along with 250
23 tires. So it speaks to that challenge that we have as
24 seeing the BLM land as illegal dumping grounds. So
25 we're going to try and see what we can do to address

1 that.

2 I would like to point out we -- virtual
3 connectivity disruption -- current staffing changes as
4 well as you can see that supervisor one. So I have
5 all of two law enforcement agents that I can rely on
6 now to cover the entire area. Many thanks to the
7 other Field Offices who are also chipping in a couple
8 of -- there's three other law enforcement officers
9 that are helping out sort of additional hours and come
10 to our area and help out if needed. So some of those
11 challenges we're working through.

12 That is it in a nutshell for what I've
13 got. So let me field some questions.

14 CHAIR BANIS: Wow. All those hands,
15 where did they all go? You must have answered
16 everybody's question. Let's start with Dan Taylor and
17 see what you've got for Tim here. The floor is yours.

18 MR. TAYLOR: Tim I'm so glad you're
19 here. I look forward to having a meeting with you and
20 talking to you and getting to know you better. You
21 know that's the one thing that I like about the in-
22 person meetings is that we have a chance to be able to
23 get to know all of you better than through this kind
24 of format. So I'm looking forward to October that
25 we're going to be able to see each other.

1 In the meantime I just wanted to make
2 sure that you understand what I was talking to all of
3 the other Field Managers. Try to think of filming
4 when you're doing your EAs and just simply throw it in
5 while you're doing it. Because filming is so much
6 less impact than building a solar plant or wind farms.
7 But I do have a question.

8 I'm not sure if you're aware of this
9 since you're new, maybe this is something you'll have
10 to get back to me later on, some of the agreements for
11 the energy companies with the current wind farms, some
12 of them would require a BLM permit. Other ones, based
13 on how the agreement was made with BLM does not need a
14 BLM permit to be able to film in those areas. They
15 would get a county permit instead.

16 Is there a way that when you're
17 renewing these agreements to be able to lean it either
18 toward the not needing a BLM permit or if your
19 staffing is able to improve -- by the way Veronica
20 Hernandez is wonderful. She's probably one of the
21 best staff persons you have in that area because she
22 gets filming and understands how to make it work --
23 can we make that a little bit easier for the film
24 crews when they do come in?

25 Because the wind farms are always asked

1 for, and right now the only time they can film there
2 is when they go to the few small areas that have
3 turbines that are in a section within an agreement
4 where they don't need a BLM permit to be able to go to
5 that area. I might be asking a question that might be
6 something you'll have to get back to me later, but
7 that's my question.

8 MR. GILLOON: So unfortunately half of
9 what came through for you was broken and distorted. I
10 apologize. I think I got the gist of it is I do want
11 to speak to, I heard you on the consider filming in
12 other projects and we can certainly add that into the
13 docket, absolutely, multiple venues. I'll factor in
14 as much as I possibly can. It just makes our projects
15 that much better.

16 I will have to get back to you on the
17 permit aspect. That part was extremely garbled, but
18 if I'm understanding, you're asking to make sure -- is
19 there a way with our renewals to expand those areas
20 and current -- virtual connectivity disruption --
21 allow that to go quicker and get more areas. My uncle
22 is a retired member of Local 1 Stagehand out in New
23 York. And so I definitely -- the industry there. I'm
24 sure he's going to be picking my brain to talk to you
25 at some point, too.

1 MR. TAYLOR: Absolutely. Let's do this
2 outside the meeting because I don't want to take up
3 too much time, but I definitely would like to sit down
4 and talk and see what I can do to help out.

5 MR. GILLOON: Okay.

6 CHAIR BANIS: Any other questions for
7 Tim? Who's next? Billy?

8 MR. MITCHELL: Yeah. Do you have any
9 active leases or allotments in your area?

10 MR. GILLOON: I just turned my video
11 off to see if that improves my audio connection.

12 MR. MITCHELL: Oh I thought you just
13 didn't want to talk to me.

14 MR. GILLOON: Sorry about that.

15 MR. MITCHELL: Did you hear?

16 MR. GILLOON: Yeah, active allotments.
17 I am currently not tracking any allotments in our
18 area. So I will confirm that.

19 MR. MITCHELL: Okay. The next thing,
20 did they ever get all those cattle out of Whitewater
21 Canyon?

22 MR. GILLOON: I do not know. I will
23 look into that as well.

24 MR. MITCHELL: All right. I appreciate
25 it. Thank you, sir.

1 MANAGER ARCHULETA: Not all of them,
2 Billy, but made a pretty good effort. We're still
3 working on it though.

4 MR. MITCHELL: Oh I thought they were
5 going to put it up for bid maybe at one point if your
6 BLM hand is doing it.

7 MANAGER ARCHULETA: You know I don't
8 know exactly how they did it. I know just about eight
9 months ago they did round up a bunch. I don't know
10 how it was done.

11 MR. MITCHELL: I heard there wasn't all
12 of them out of there. I was just curious.

13 MANAGER ARCHULETA: Yeah there's still
14 some.

15 MR. MITCHELL: Are the Indians claiming
16 them?

17 MANAGER ARCHULETA: They're not
18 claiming them. Nobody is claiming them.

19 MR. MITCHELL: Yeah I had two get over
20 there years ago where the old Bar O was before those
21 guys sold out. But yeah mine have been branded and
22 stuff. Yeah I was just wondering whether they were
23 all out of there or what they were going to do with
24 it.

25 MR. GILLOON: Well if we get any new

1 ones we'll go ahead and make sure we have a good lunch
2 meal menu planned for our October meeting.

3 MR. MITCHELL: Okay. Thank you very
4 much.

5 CHAIR BANIS: Anyone next? Jayne, hi.
6 You're on. You take it next. You're driving. I
7 think you're on mute, Jayne.

8 MS. POWELL: Sorry about that.

9 CHAIR BANIS: Okay. There you go.

10 MS. POWELL: On the CVWD Environmental
11 Impact Statement, is that for continuation of the use
12 of the recharge facilities, or is that for additional
13 recharge facilities in the Whitewater wash?

14 MR. GILLOON: So for the CVWD right-of-
15 way grant, that is going to be for continued use of
16 the lands. And I'm not sure what -- it's got a new
17 right-of-way grant, so I'm not 100 percent sure. I
18 haven't looked at the project map. I can get back to
19 you. I do know that no new construction is proposed
20 as part of that new right-of-way grant. That's all
21 the information I have at this time. I can get back
22 to you on that, though.

23 MS. POWELL: Okay. I would appreciate
24 it. Thank you. That's all of my questions.

25 CHAIR BANIS: All right. The floor is

1 open. More questions for Tim? We're holding back the
2 good ones. Okay. Tim, thank you. It's a pleasure to
3 have you here at the first DAC meeting, and we look
4 forward to having you on the hot seat at the next one,
5 too down closer to you next time.

6 MR. GILLOON: Absolutely. I'm looking
7 forward to it. Thank you very much.

8 CHAIR BANIS: You bet. Andrew, you
9 have another star.

10 MANAGER ARCHULETA: Yep. We're going
11 to bump down to Ridgecrest, but I just want everybody
12 to know that at 3:15 we will cut it off right there so
13 we can open the meeting up for public comment. And
14 then we'll return after that back to wherever we are
15 on the agenda. So Carl Symons for Ridgecrest.

16 MR. SYMONS: Good afternoon. So I
17 guess I got to talk until 3:15 so no questions, right?
18 I won't go over the stuff like the others in the
19 report, but I'll just give you some highlights in the
20 areas that were in the report.

21 One of the areas is in archeology that
22 we're trying to work through several NAGPRA cases. A
23 couple up north and a couple down here on the southern
24 half. We have assistance from both the Barstow and
25 the Bakersfield Field Office due to the fact that my

1 archeologist retired as you can see there at the end
2 of the year. So they're helping and giving me some
3 assistance to try to get those resolved.

4 In grazing, we've got some busy little
5 things going on. We did relinquish most of the Rudnik
6 Common Allotment, or it was relinquished to us. And
7 as you heard Greg talk about the Durability Agreement,
8 we are working with Cal Fish and Wildlife on the
9 Durability Agreement for that area with the 8minute
10 Energy and using that for mitigation for numerous
11 projects, all of which are on private land. None of
12 the projects are actually on BLM with the exception of
13 one Gen tie line that ties into over in the Jawbone
14 area.

15 The Kelso Peak allotment, we're trying
16 to get that renewed. It used to be combined with a
17 Woolstalf permit, but we split it. And so Bakersfield
18 took the Woolstalf, and we got the Kelso Peak. So
19 we're trying to get that NEPA through and get it back
20 out. We didn't have any sheep turn out this year. It
21 seemed like the last five years we've had several
22 years where it's just been too dry and there hasn't
23 been enough sheep because it isn't a critical habitat,
24 so there has a minimum of them out there.

25 Even with the Rudnik Common Allotment

1 relinquishment, at Ridgecrest we still have
2 approximately 900,000 acres and 33 allotments, so we
3 do have a fairly active grazing position. Last Friday
4 was that person's last day, got a job at wild horse
5 and burro program which they really wanted. So very
6 happy for them.

7 Lands and realty. A lot of different
8 right-of-ways and interesting one is Camino Solar
9 Project. We did get that project approved. Right now
10 what we're doing is going through all of their reports
11 and plans that they have to submit before they can get
12 a notice to proceed, so that's kind of where we're
13 doing most of that review.

14 One interesting one you might find is
15 we are issuing a right-of-way to China Lake for
16 basically the Navy. It's their approach at air space
17 to NAWS, and they don't want us to prohibit us
18 building anything over 75 feet. So basically they
19 don't want to do anything on the ground, but they
20 don't want to interfere with their pass. So we're
21 working with San Diego on that one.

22 Minerals real quick. We do have
23 besides the ones that are on here, we have three small
24 plan of operations, a CDM -- Canyon, Joker's Wild in
25 Fremont-Kramer, and Gold Discovery Group. Also there

1 Sydney Peak -- expansion, that's about a 40 acre
2 expansion of the program. Then Red River Creek on --
3 Lake. That one is a 25-acre site that's kind of on
4 hold. They want to proceed with it, they're just
5 trying to wrap up some loose ends.

6 Also Rascal is lithium in Panamint
7 Valley is a drilling project for lithium. And then
8 Searles Valley -- we're working with that. We're
9 trying to fill that geologist position. Right now the
10 state office is helping us with inspections. And then
11 we're doing the Rand Mountain cleanup. We're starting
12 on the third site to get that done. The district
13 office, Sterling White, is leading up that and has
14 been a real help with all that. It's basically
15 reducing the arsenic exposure that's on there.

16 And then for the recreational stuff,
17 I'd like to give a shout out to the Friends of
18 Jawbone. We talk about our grants that we get every
19 year. Friends of Jawbone gets a significant amount
20 and just multiples what we can do. And not only that
21 but during this whole COVID thing they've managed to
22 keep functioning and keep putting stuff through so
23 that the areas are kept clean, they're kept
24 maintained, the routes are still marked and everything
25 so that the increase that we're seeing due to the

1 pandemic, the people using the public lands, that the
2 area that they have been helping maintain has been an
3 outstanding job. And I want to thank Randy and his
4 group for doing that. They've really been a lifesaver
5 during this pandemic to do that literally.

6 We're doing two wild scenic river
7 plans: One for Cottonwood Creek and one for Surprise
8 Canyon. The Forest Service is the lead on Cottonwood
9 Creek and the Park Service is the lead on Surprise
10 Canyon. The scoping period closed yesterday for
11 Cottonwood Creek. We haven't gotten that far yet on
12 Surprise Canyon.

13 Then on the wild horse and burro front.
14 Besides the data that was in the report, we -- staff
15 in the -- Office and the -- Office have been working
16 very hard and it looks like we've got lined up to do
17 an emergency gather of 250 -- off of the Navy base.
18 The horses are -- there's a number of them that are in
19 bad shape of course with the drought. The water is
20 limited, and the limited sources they'll gather
21 around, and they'll eat the forage and then they don't
22 have enough food. They won't stray very far because
23 there's no water, so it causes a lot of problems.

24 And it's not just us. I know that El
25 Centro and Needles are both experiencing problems with

1 burros and trying to get out there, too. I think Mike
2 is going to haul water and feed to try to help out
3 until we can do something about that. So these years
4 of droughts are really tough on the horses and burros
5 and require a lot of extra effort to try to get them
6 through the drought and healthy for when the rains
7 come again.

8 Wildlife. We did have a field trip
9 with U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service. We're trying to
10 get an agreement with -- a consultation with them on
11 Randsburg Wash Road. When they expanded the open
12 area, there's now open area on both sides of Randsburg
13 Wash Road which is withdrawn for the Navy. We have
14 two places we can cross right now. We've asked for
15 one more, but we're trying to get some consultation to
16 understand how we're going to do the -- desert
17 tortoise on that road along with the Navy.

18 Also we took a trip and looked at
19 California Inyo Towhee habitat and what we can do to
20 try and help to see what things that we can do to try
21 to assist in their delisting efforts for that. And
22 I'll leave it there. That leaves a few minutes for
23 questions.

24 CHAIR BANIS: Andrew, it's 3:15. And I
25 heard your suggestion before about temporarily

1 suspending our progress and moving into public
2 comment. That might be the only time certain thing that
3 would really be helpful. I have not run the online
4 public comment before, so I'm not sure. Maybe you
5 folks should take it from here with respect to
6 monitoring those attendees from the public and helping
7 me get them on the line.

8 MS. VAN DER LINDEN: No problem, Mr.
9 Banis. Matthew and I are prepared to do that.

10 CHAIR BANIS: Oh awesome. Well with
11 that, is there any objection, folks? I know that it
12 says break here, but I hope -- one last chance to
13 object before we move into a public comment period.

14 MR. BAGLEY: No, let's stay on schedule
15 with that. It's published in case people are standing
16 by.

17 MANAGER ARCHULETA: We'll come back,
18 wrap up with questions for Carl and the rest of the
19 agenda at 4:00.

20 CHAIR BANIS: Perfect. Well then happy
21 to take public comment and any assistance you can
22 provide in getting folks on the line. Thank you.

23 MS. VAN DER LINDEN: So if any members
24 of the public would like to address the DAC at this
25 time, we ask that you raise your hand. And I will be

1 calling on you in the order in which you put up your
2 hand or doing my best attempt to do exactly that. So
3 if you have a question at this time or would like to
4 address the DAC, please raise your hand.

5 MR. GIBBS: And we will put up a timer
6 for three minutes so you know how much time you have
7 left.

8 MS. VAN DER LINDEN: Thank you for
9 that, Matthew.

10 MR. GIBBS: And my apologies. I had
11 disabled the "raise hand" feature for the public, but
12 it is now enabled. So if you were looking for that
13 before, it should appear on your bottom row of buttons
14 if you're on the attendee side of things. And it
15 looks like we have a couple of hands raised.

16 MS. VAN DER LINDEN: Thank you for
17 that, yes.

18 CHAIR BANIS: Good. Here they are.

19 MS. VAN DER LINDEN: Let's go with
20 Lisbet first, and Tauria you'll be on deck to go next.
21 Thank you.

22 MR. GIBBS: All right. Lisbet, you can
23 now unmute your mic.

24 MS. THORESEN: Okay. Can you hear me
25 now?

1 MR. GIBBS: We can hear you.

2 MS. THORESON: Thank you so much. My
3 name is Lisbet Thoreson. I'm Public Lands
4 Representative for the San Diego Mineral and Gems
5 Society, and I'm speaking on behalf of myself and six
6 other members of Southern California Mineral Societies
7 who are all hobby collecting advocates. And I'd like
8 to start by saying how pleased we are all to see
9 resumption of the DAC meetings.

10 And I'd like to say thank you for your
11 work and thank you to all the BLM staff for the
12 terrific presentations today. Thank you especially to
13 Amy Fesnock for her excellent presentation on the
14 desert tortoises. I really appreciate Jim Bagley's
15 remarks about protecting the unpatented mining claims.

16 I'd like to draw attention of the
17 council to a letter for inclusion in the meeting
18 record that I e-mailed to Michelle Van Der Linden
19 yesterday. I apologize for not getting it to you
20 sooner. It provides the context for remarks, but
21 because it's longer than the time is allowing for
22 here, I'm going to narrow the scope of my comments
23 now. I have two comments related to the DRECP
24 implementation and one very short comment about the
25 Mojave Trails subgroup.

1 So the first comment/question relates
2 to the reconciliation of the West Mojave Route Network
3 Project and the DRECP. A lot of rockhounds
4 contributed a lot of input on these two gargantuan
5 long-term projects. And back in 2019 rockhounds
6 understood that a reconciliation between these two big
7 projects would be needed to resolve conflicts and
8 overlaps between them, and new maps would be produced
9 for visitors to public lands.

10 So it's a practical matter for those of
11 us who would like to visit -- areas in the desert and
12 have been a little bit frustrated with what we've
13 encountered in recent months, the time to find out
14 what is accessible is not when we encounter new
15 physical barriers once we're out in the desert. The
16 old PDF maps are useless, and so our question is,
17 where can rockhounds obtain current and intelligible
18 maps that reflect this reconciliation of those two
19 projects? If you want me to pause for a response, or
20 shall I continue with my second question/comment?

21 CHAIR BANIS: Keep going. It's your
22 time.

23 MS. THORESON: Okay. Second
24 comment/question, it relates to the status of the
25 DRECP accommodations for hobby collecting. When the

1 DRECP record of decision was approved in September
2 2016, the DREC Program Manager Vicki Campbell
3 specifically advised rockhounds during a conference
4 call that that record of decision reflected
5 significant accommodations to rockhounds based on
6 their numerous comment letters. She told us that the
7 development focus areas were removed and redrawn where
8 adjacencies or overlaps created potential conflicts.
9 Rockhounds benefitted at the expense of renewable
10 energy.

11 Now it appears to us that this may be a
12 little bit in doubt because back in January of 2013,
13 the BLM released a news release announcing a proposal
14 --

15 MS. VAN DER LINDEN: Lisbet, you've
16 reached the three-minute mark. If we do have
17 additional time at the end of the public comment
18 period, you can come back and complete that. And for
19 the members of the DAC, she did submit her comments in
20 writing, and I have provided those to the court
21 reporter, and they will be included in the record.
22 Next we have, and I'm probably going to butcher this
23 name, Tauria Linala.

24 MR. GIBBS: All right. Tauria, you
25 should be able to unmute.

1 MS. LINALA: Yes, thank you so much.
2 Appreciate it. Great job everybody. This is the
3 first time I attended the Desert Advisory Council. I
4 am impressed by all the level of cooperation and
5 appreciated seeing the transparency from all the
6 different parts of the agency and learning more about
7 your work.

8 I live in San Luis Obispo, California,
9 and my name is Tauria Linala. And I just wanted to
10 congratulate you and thank you for this effort. I
11 appreciate environmental concerns and enjoy hiking. I
12 also enjoy off-road riding but not the super racy
13 kind. I like to just drive on a back road. So your
14 work is real important, real vital. I want to give my
15 greetings and congratulate you on your efforts and
16 look forward to more. Thank you.

17 CHAIR BANIS: Thanks for attending the
18 meeting today, Tauria. I hope we get to see you in
19 person at a future meeting.

20 MS. VAN DER LINDEN: Thank you. Steve
21 Shaw is next for public comment.

22 MR. SHAW: Yes, I'm Steve Shaw. And my
23 comments have to do with the needs of the prairie
24 falcons in the Mojave Desert. And I'm a multiuser of
25 the desert. I hike, I bike, I ride. I use my OHV to

1 explore. I hunt, and I really enjoy exploring the
2 desert. I support public use, and I do not want to
3 see too many restrictions on use if they can be
4 avoided. And they can with education.

5 My issue has to do with the needs of
6 the prairie falcon in this area. I am a master
7 falconer, part of the Prairie Falcon Conservancy, a
8 non-profit of the Pacific Coast Conservation Alliance.
9 I am the conservation chair of the California Hawking
10 Club. I'm involved with Transition Habitat
11 Conservancy and with the Mojave Desert Land Trust.

12 I would like to put on the radar of the
13 Desert Advisory Council the issues of the needs of the
14 prairie falcon. They are not endangered yet; however,
15 their nesting needs are not being addressed with the
16 expanded use of our desert. Solar projects, increased
17 OHV use, and recreational shooting are all affecting
18 the prairie falcon. It is necessary to consider these
19 issues sooner than later.

20 Most important are the needs of their
21 nesting irays. [ph] These raptors can adapt to --
22 energy and recreational use of their foraging habitat,
23 but their nesting periods and -- are in a place that
24 is not adaptable because it doesn't change. These --
25 need more attention as the foraging areas are

1 affected. Raptor and marked irays are being affected
2 by a new agent. -- and has equipment and -- allow
3 increased expansion into -- nesting areas.

4 The issue is the OHV and public use are
5 impinging upon the nesting of prairie falcons on
6 public lands and on adjacent non-protected private
7 lands with no owners around. The OHV users are riding
8 upon buttes with nesting areas, and they are
9 unregulated. Users are being led to BLM routes on BLM
10 routes to private lands with -- and there is no
11 intervention. Recreational shooters seem to like
12 buttes with nesting raptors and don't know that the
13 raptors are there. The raptors look like pigeons. --
14 and that affects their nesting.

15 The Mojave Desert Land Trust is
16 initiating a -- project and newly funded program --

17 MS. VAN DER LINDEN: Mr. Shaw, you have
18 reached the end of your time. If we do have
19 additional time at the end and you would like a second
20 period, you can request that by raising your hand.
21 For the moment Jora Fogg is next for public comment.

22 MS. FOGG: Hi, my name is Jora Fogg.
23 I'm the Policy Director for Friends of the Inyo.
24 Thank you to the DAC members. This has been a long
25 day. I look forward to seeing everybody in person.

1 All-day Zoom meetings are tough.

2 I just wanted to briefly ask about the
3 Field Manager reports and see if it's possible for the
4 public to get those reports prior to the meetings. I
5 know in the past we have had hard copies available.
6 And you know we're able to look over those before the
7 reports are given. You know, for time purposes the
8 Field Managers weren't able to cover everything in the
9 reports, but it would be really good for the public to
10 comment on some of the things that are in these
11 reports. And if we don't time to address that during
12 the meeting, I think that's something that should be
13 remedied. Thank you.

14 MS. VAN DER LINDEN: Those are all the
15 hands that I see at this time. Do we have anybody
16 else wishing to address the DAC at this time? Lisbet,
17 I see your hand is up. I apologize, Ruth Hidalgo has
18 not had the opportunity to speak yet, so we're going
19 to let her go first. Lisbet, please leave your hand
20 up. Ruth, you now have the floor.

21 MR. GIBBS: Ruth, we're unable to hear
22 you. I'm not sure if maybe your mic is muffled. Do
23 you want to try again?

24 MS. HIDALGO: Any better?

25 MR. GIBBS: Yes, better now.

1 MS. HIDALGO: Okay. Recreational
2 rockhound. This is the first meeting that I've been
3 able to attend, and I'm glad to see the DAC is back.
4 That's kind of really important, and I'm really
5 looking forward to future in-person meetings.

6 I wanted to thank Director Archuleta
7 for recognizing rockhounding as a recreational
8 activity in the desert when he came on board. In his
9 press release I was thrilled to see that. It is a
10 very vital recreation enjoyed by a lot of users, and I
11 appreciate his recognition on that. And I just wanted
12 to say I can't wait to get more involved, especially
13 with the subgroup on the Mojave Trails Monument.

14 Look forward to getting that thing
15 rolling again. Recreational rockhounding in the
16 Mojave Trails National Monument is one of those
17 wobbling issues, and we want to get on board with that
18 and make sure that we get involved if possible. Thank
19 you.

20 MS. VAN DER LINDEN: Lisbet, I see your
21 hand up. Do we have anybody else who has not yet had
22 the opportunity to address the council. Would anybody
23 else like to make comments at this time? Please raise
24 your hand. Okay. I see both Lisbet and Steve Shaw,
25 who have both spoken already. If we don't have

1 anybody else wishing to provide comment to the
2 council, Lisbet the floor is yours.

3 MS. THORESON: Can you hear me now?

4 MS. VAN DER LINDEN: We can hear you.

5 MS. THORESON: Thank you, Michelle. So
6 I'd like to second what Ruth just said, that we
7 support the creation of a DAC subgroup that would
8 provide input on the drafting of a management plan for
9 the Mojave Trails National Monument because it is such
10 a sacrosanct hallow ground for rockhounds. Many
11 collecting areas in there, particularly in the north
12 and south Cady Mountains.

13 Also we look forward to public
14 engagement webinars that were described by Mike Ahrens
15 in his report. Really looking forward to that.
16 Looping back to the status of the DRECP and its
17 accommodations that were provided for hobby collecting
18 at the time of the ROD.

19 As I was saying, we were told about
20 these DFAs that were redrawn where there were overlaps
21 or conflicts for recreational users. And we're
22 concerned now that perhaps this is in doubt because a
23 BLM news release on January 13, 2021 announced that
24 the BLM proposed making modifications to the CDNCL
25 which underlies the DRECP. The BLM press release

1 invited quote, "comments on how land designations
2 identified in the plan might affect development of
3 solar, wind, or other renewable energy resources" end
4 quote.

5 So in light of this proposal, together
6 with the number and fast-track pace of permitting
7 industrial scale renewable energy products in the
8 desert, does this mean that the BLM is undoing the
9 accommodations that were given to recreational users
10 in the record of decision in 2016 and restoring the
11 old EFAs? And may we look forward to a status update
12 in a future DAC meeting on this subject? Thank you.

13 MS. VAN DER LINDEN: Thank you, Lisbet.
14 Is there anybody else who has not addressed the
15 council that wishes to do so now? Please raise your
16 hand. Seeing none. Steve Shaw, you have the floor.

17 MR. SHAW: Yes, just very briefly
18 regarding the prairie falcons. I would hope that the
19 prairie falcon nesting needs would deserve some
20 inclusion under the DAC and possibly as a subgroup.
21 The Mojave Desert Land Trust and the California
22 Hawking Group Club hope to educate the DAC more in the
23 future about the impending needs of this wildlife
24 group in their corridors, prairie hawk, and irays.
25 Thank you very much.

1 MS. VAN DER LINDEN: Thank you. Is
2 there anybody else wishing to address the DAC at this
3 time? Please raise your hand. Tauria Linala,
4 beautiful name. I apologize that I'm mispronouncing
5 it. The floor is yours.

6 MS. LINALA: Thank you. My additional
7 comment is I want to agree that having materials
8 available such as an agenda and link reports would be
9 really helpful again.

10 MS. VAN DER LINDEN: Thank you. Is
11 there anybody else wishing to address the council at
12 this time? Please raise your hand. Seeing none, I
13 yield the floor back to you, Mr. Banis.

14 CHAIR BANIS: Thank you. I want to
15 give a special thanks to the members of the public
16 because you all stuck around with us for so long, and
17 it's been a long day. Longer for you because we get
18 to gab among ourselves, but most of it have been in
19 your seats before. And we know that it takes a lot of
20 patience to sit through to get to your opportunity to
21 have your few words.

22 And thank you also for those for
23 raising your hand a second time. And I'm glad we had
24 time to accommodate that second bite of the apple. So
25 with that folks, if there's no objections, I'm going

1 to return back to where we left off. And that was
2 Mike Ahrens had just presented his Field Manager
3 report for the Needles resource area. Do we have
4 questions or comments or anything for Mike? So I'm
5 looking for raised hands on the Desert Advisory
6 Council side.

7 MANAGER ARCHULETA: Actually Randy, it
8 was Carl that had just finished.

9 CHAIR BANIS: Who did I just say?

10 MANAGER ARCHULETA: Mike.

11 CHAIR BANIS: Sorry, Carl.

12 MANAGER ARCHULETA: So questions for
13 Carl for Ridgecrest.

14 CHAIR BANIS: Yeah, the guy without the
15 hair. There you go. Okay. Sorry.

16 MR. SYMONS: Thanks for trying to help
17 me out, Randy.

18 CHAIR BANIS: Any questions of Carl?

19 MR. ROBINSON: This is Bob Robinson.
20 I'm raising my hand. I'm on the phone.

21 CHAIR BANIS: Hi, Bob. Go ahead,
22 please.

23 MR. ROBINSON: I just had a couple of
24 things. And one of them was the Conglomerate Mesa up
25 at Cerro Gordo. I know some people that worked for

1 the people that owned the Cerro Gordo quite a few
2 years back, and they went and core sampled that whole
3 area. That's why there's existing roads there. And
4 has this company attempted to locate the results from
5 those core sampling, or is this going to be a
6 duplication of the same thing?

7 MR. SYMONS: Bob, you know as far as
8 the exact same thing, they are trying to get some
9 extents, so they're going in the same general area.
10 And some of the people in the company actually worked
11 for a company that drilled back in the '90s. One of
12 the things is on this proposal that they have,
13 apparently the cores are no longer available.

14 And it's my understanding that in the
15 mining industry that having those cores, it's very
16 important. They just took on the first drilling that
17 they did a few months back or actually a little more
18 than a few months. But they just took out chips, and
19 this time they're actually going to be going in and
20 trying to get core samples and having that. But
21 that's been the issue with all the drilling is from
22 what I understand the cores are no longer available.

23 MR. ROBINSON: Yeah. My understanding
24 was at the time they never found anything that was
25 viable enough to make the investment. And I noticed

1 this company is from British Columbia.

2 MR. SYMONS: Yes, this is a Canadian
3 company with a subsidiary here in the U.S. doing the
4 proposal.

5 MR. ROBINSON: And the other thing, and
6 this also applies to the Conglomerate, actually to the
7 pumice mine in the Makaya [sic] 2.

8 MR. SYMONS: Makayla?

9 MR. ROBISON: That area, my cousin and
10 I went up with another person I think from Lone Pine.
11 And when they put in that road, they were proposing to
12 put a road into McCulloch [ph] Valley for geothermal,
13 and that's in that same general area. And there was
14 extensive cultural resources, and I would like to be
15 able to take a field trip with whoever wants to go up
16 to -- valley and look at the proposed routes and the
17 proposed plan and see what exactly is going to be
18 affected.

19 MR. SYMONS: That's for the Makayla
20 mine?

21 MR. ROBINSON: Yeah, the Makayla. And
22 the Conglomerate Mesa also is -- when they go to do
23 ground-disturbing activity in that area that they have
24 a tribal monitor available onsite because the roads
25 are pretty much gone, you know. And they're going to

1 have to recut new roads.

2 MR. SYMONS: Yeah, I hear you on the
3 cultural monitor. On the last one they had monitors,
4 and I'm assuming that they will. But that will be
5 addressed when we go through our NEPA documents. And
6 as far as the Makayla, anytime Bob just get a hold of
7 me. And I'd be more than happy to go out there and
8 take a field trip and show you around to whatever you
9 want to see.

10 MR. ROBINSON: Hopefully you'll have an
11 archeologist by then.

12 MR. SYMONS: Yeah I hope so.

13 MR. ROBINSON: Yeah. I know some
14 people that applied.

15 MR. SYMONS: Okay.

16 MR. ROBINSON: Thank you.

17 MR. SYMONS: Thanks.

18 CHAIR BANIS: Bob, have you been on
19 that road that they cut into McLeod Flat? Have you
20 seen that road that they cut?

21 MR. ROBINSON: No, I haven't seen it
22 since they cut it. I haven't seen it. I know they
23 were going to do a large cut at the top. And I
24 noticed they kind of disappeared, the people who did
25 that. So I don't know what's up with that.

1 CHAIR BANIS: Yeah, large cut is the
2 right word for it. I saw it a few months ago, and I
3 was surprised how large the cut was. Larger than what
4 I expected it would have been.

5 MR. ROBINSON: Well I knew it was going
6 to be big because we walked up there and walked the
7 whole thing. And we didn't have any issues with that
8 area at the time. But they were going to go up in
9 there around and then go up to, I think they were
10 trying to get out of as much federal oversight as
11 possible because they were going to a school section
12 on top of that mountain.

13 CHAIR BANIS: Yes. What they've done
14 so far is they cut the road of course and there's PVC
15 pipe that is in the process of wanting to be
16 assembled.

17 MR. ROBINSON: Yeah. I know where
18 their trailer and their office and they have a --
19 where they park their equipment. All their equipment
20 is gone and there's just one I think generator sitting
21 out in front of the trailer and nothing has moved in a
22 very long time.

23 Oh I have one more thing about AV [ph]
24 Reservoir. Most of that is DWP, but there is some BLM
25 as a part of that. And what we've worked out with DWP

1 in the Beacon area and at the Penstock is all of the
2 cultural resources they discover in the process of
3 doing their project are reinterned on the property.
4 And I know that once they're collected, they have to
5 turn them over to BLM. And if it's possible, we've
6 done with BLM in Bakersfield, to leave those on the
7 property and document them and possibly reintern
8 everything at the same time instead of duplicating.
9 Because it will just go to that warehouse facility at
10 -- and that will be the end of it.

11 MR. SYMONS: I wasn't aware of the
12 agreement, Bob. But we can talk about that and see
13 what --

14 MR. ROBINSON: Okay.

15 CHAIR BANIS: I have Dan Taylor's hand
16 up.

17 MR. TAYLOR: I'm actually going to ask
18 a non-film question. Is that believable? Hey, Carl.
19 I've got a question about the California High Speed
20 Rail. I see that they're looking at anywhere from 40
21 to 160 acres of impact. Is there a reason why that's
22 such a wide range that they don't know what it's going
23 to be?

24 MR. SYMONS: Yeah, some of it's going
25 to be underground. Some of it's going to be above

1 ground. They're actually going to tie some spots.
2 They're coming close to property. So it's the parcels
3 that they're going to impact that is what they're
4 referring to there. So once they get it done, we
5 don't have the 100 percent drawings yet, and that's
6 what we'll have to get when we get to the final -- but
7 they are going to tunnel under in some places, and
8 they they're actually going to be above ground like on
9 the PCT they're going to be above ground going over
10 the top.

11 MR. TAYLOR: All right. Thank you,
12 Carl.

13 CHAIR BANIS: That's all the hands I
14 have. Last call for Carl. All right. We have a new
15 addition to our reports this time, Andrew.

16 MANAGER ARCHULETA: Yeah so I think
17 with our last face-to-face meeting in Palm Springs I
18 started to include our fire and fuels program, and I
19 want to continue to do that. So today we have James
20 Gannon who is going to cover the California Desert
21 District Interagency Fire and Fuels Program. So James
22 I'll turn it over to you.

23 MR. GANNON: Good afternoon. I'm James
24 Gannon. I'm the Fuels Program Manager and Acting Fire
25 Management Officer for, well until Monday. Is

1 everybody able to see the presentation?

2 MR. GIBBS: We can see it. Do you want
3 to maximize your Chrome browser for us?

4 MR. GANNON: I need to rearrange a
5 couple things so I can see what I'm doing. Okay.

6 MR. GIBBS: There you go.

7 MR. GANNON: So I've worked in the
8 California Desert District in fuels management since
9 2002. Prior to that I worked for Joshua Tree National
10 Park, the BLM in Carlsbad, New Mexico, San Bernardino
11 National Forest, various operations, prevention, and
12 aviation positions.

13 And the CDIFP, the California District
14 Interagency Fire Program is comprised of BLM and the
15 National Park Service and includes the five BLM Field
16 Offices within the CDD and the three national parks,
17 Death Valley, Joshua Tree and Mojave Preserve.

18 I will be providing an update on the
19 fuels program and the current fire situation. In the
20 presentation there's a map that shows some of the
21 various fuels projects. As you zoom in, more will
22 appear. You can pan around to see if there's anything
23 in particular you want to take a look at.

24 But the CDIFP includes fuels management
25 and -- prevention. There's the Unit Fuels Program

1 Manager, myself; a fuels technician; two mit-ed
2 specialists; and two mit-ed technicians that have a
3 heavy emphasis on prevention activities and
4 controlling. We work a lot out in the field. We're
5 meeting with the public and visitors.

6 The field program began to evolve into
7 our current program that we have now in 2002 with the
8 hiring of the fuels management staff. We began
9 planning and implementing fuels projects. We went
10 from a program that treated less than 100 acres on a
11 year on an irregular basis to treating up to
12 approximately 10,000 acres annually. At one point the
13 unit had four dedicated fuels management staff that
14 were just working on fuels management in addition to
15 four mit-ed specialists. We had two prevention techs,
16 and we also had a 10-person fuels module focused
17 entirely on implementing fuels treatments. In 2005
18 the crew was disbanded in favor of contracting out
19 fuels management work.

20 Since the fuels module was disbanded
21 and the CDD never had a hand crew, we began planning
22 with the California Conservation Corps to develop
23 basically a new BLM/CCC hand crew for the CDD. We
24 entered into a Good Neighbor Authority Agreement with
25 the California Conservation Corps, an 18-to-20-person

1 type 2 hand crew. The crew -- group 5 works on fuels
2 projects and is available under a separate agreement
3 as a type 2 hand crew for fire management and
4 suppression.

5 The program provides the corps members
6 with valuable experience and training to create an
7 applicant pool from which BLM and cooperators can
8 recruit and hire new employees. Since the program's
9 inception, the crew which is currently comprised
10 entirely of women has provided six employees that have
11 been hired by the BLM; five on the CDD; one in
12 Bakersfield; and the one that went to work at
13 Bakersfield ended up coming to CDD eventually; one was
14 hired by the Forest Service; three were hired by
15 cooperators in other agencies, Riverside County
16 Habitat Conservation Agency, California State Parks,
17 and one went to the City of Rialto.

18 The crews completed over 2,500 acres of
19 fuels treatments including implementing prescribed
20 fires. The CCC crew also worked on the Amboy Crater
21 Trail reroute that was mentioned earlier. We also
22 have mitigation education staff that works with
23 communities and cooperators to help develop community
24 wildfire protection plans, help with planning
25 community defense-type treatments. A lot of the work

1 they do is working with fire safe councils to plan
2 treatments in areas where we may have a gap in public
3 lands or state-managed lands. And we will use them in
4 their work to connect the dots basically to maintain
5 the integrity of the fuels treatment so that we have
6 one continuous project.

7 They've done a lot to help communities
8 and fire safe councils including developing a --
9 presentation for workshop to help residents plan to
10 harden their homes and create defensible space in
11 addition to the community wildfire protection plans.

12 So in addition to the CWPP they provide
13 educational-type events. This next table on the
14 presentation shows the numbers that were completed in
15 FY '20 last year. We had a total of 16 educational-
16 type events, 450 non-federal acres treated,
17 approximately 1,200 homes were protected by these non-
18 federal treatments. The number of communities that
19 were assisted is 15. At one point in the past we had
20 been doing home assessments to help homeowners to
21 determine what they should be doing to not only harden
22 their home, but to create their defensible space.

23 We did complete three new CWPPs and
24 participated in the update of 12 CWPPs. The fuels
25 program has developed as I mentioned over the past few

1 years we've treated between 7,000 to 10,000 acres per
2 year. Planning is based on fuel loading as well as
3 historic fire occurrences and activities on land that
4 present potential ignition sources. So we have a lot
5 of highways, interstates and other roadways that cross
6 through land which present a significant ignition
7 source from vehicle fires like mechanical failures
8 that result in sparks and other things.

9 So we focus a lot on roadside
10 treatments. We look at other areas where there's
11 potential ignition sources and treat there. Since
12 treatments that have been placed in areas that have
13 been used repeatedly with upwards of 30 treatments
14 used in the last 10 to 15 years to control fires.

15 In 2020 there were 14 fires that
16 intercepted our fuels treatments that were used to
17 either contain the fire or slow the fire spread or
18 provide other opportunities for suppression for us to
19 take action on those fires. Starting in FY 2018 we
20 had a large focus on the southern border. Over 3,000
21 acres have been treated along the southern border so
22 far to protect resources and communities as well as
23 border-related infrastructure.

24 Work was also completed to support
25 Border Patrol Agents in their operations. We've

1 created safety zones for our agents and others that
2 may become trapped in remote areas by wildfire. We've
3 coordinated with the Border Patrol's Public Lands on
4 occasion. -- fire, fire safe councils, local tribes,
5 and San Diego Gas and Electric to plan and implement
6 the treatments in southern San Diego County.

7 So a lot of what we've done is tied
8 into for instance the work that SCG&E has been doing
9 on the power line right-of-ways. We've tied into
10 those to connect the dots. We've tied into fuels
11 treatments the tribes have done on the reservations to
12 create continuous fuel breaks so that we don't have
13 openings in case the fire does burn through, maintain
14 the integrity of the overall treatments altogether.

15 And then the table I'm showing now has
16 accomplishments for FY '20. We've got -- cost of 10.8
17 million. We got 6.4 million. We were able to
18 complete 42 treatments to treat 10,486 acres. We also
19 completed 42 community assistance type activities.

20 Our treatments range from prescribed --
21 burning and pile burning, mechanical, and chemical and
22 biological treatments to accomplish the fuel treatment
23 goals of the unit. -- based on vegetation types,
24 topography, the potential to impact natural resources
25 and other factors and work closely with resources

1 staff to plan and implement the treatments to not only
2 manage hazardous fuels but to improve and restore
3 various plant communities and habitat -- species such
4 as Stephens' kangaroo rat or SKR, Quino checkerspot
5 butterfly, Yuma's Ridgway Rail.

6 And we incorporate habitat management
7 objectives into our fuels treatments. The regulatory
8 agencies even use a BLM fuels treatment area as one of
9 their central sites that are monitoring Quino
10 checkerspot butterfly habitat.

11 We worked with the regulatory agencies
12 and the Department of Defense under the Recovery and
13 Sustainment Partnership Initiative to plan and
14 implement tests to move SKR, the Stephens' Kangaroo
15 Rat, toward recovery. That included vegetation
16 management, a lot of prescribed burning, and other
17 mechanical and hand treatments including monitoring
18 and other work. In part due to some of our work and
19 others', the services submitted a recommendation to
20 downlist the species.

21 In addition to that work, given that
22 many of the wildfires in the desert areas are burning
23 invasive plants. We focus a lot on salt cedar and
24 other non-natives and are working closely with
25 cooperatives such as the Wildlands Conservancy and

1 Friends of the Desert Mountains to target a basis for
2 removal. We were told that one of their canyons that
3 we had finished treating salt cedar -- now has water
4 flowing, the cedar even. So that's a pretty
5 substantial improvement. That area provides an
6 important water source for -- bighorn sheep and other
7 species. So that's a positive note.

8 We're also currently working on the
9 fires and fuels aspects of the Whitewater Wild and
10 Scenic River Comprehensive River Management Plan and
11 the Sand to Snow National Monument Plan.

12 We also complete fire management
13 planning. We developed a fire management plan in both
14 a -- and spatial format. So here's an example of our
15 spatial fire management plan and I'll link to that.
16 Another product developed by fuels staff and others is
17 the Fire to Interoperating Plan. The Fire to
18 Interoperating Plan is a decision-support document
19 which aggregates information on the analyses of fire
20 danger and uses that information to create staffing
21 response levels and other plans.

22 Included in here also are some of the
23 other accomplishments of the fuels programs. We've
24 put together some documents that help agency
25 administrators. We are support for the Wildlife Fire

1 Decision Support which helps document and distribute
2 the agency administrator's direction for how to manage
3 a fire in a specific area. We manage the Fire GIS,
4 the weather information management system, the
5 automated weather stations throughout the district,
6 coordinate the -- control, coordinate the Resource
7 Survival Program, and coordinates emergency
8 stabilization and rehabilitation work for --.

9 Eventually fuels managements is going
10 to go into the vegetation management action portal so
11 we'll have one spot for managing and tracking and all
12 that. I'm the training officer in IQCS, Incident
13 Qualification Certification System, account manager
14 for the unit. So I manage the training and the
15 qualifications for the BLM parts of our staff.

16 We have a prescribed burn that we do
17 every year out at Lake Matthews in West Riverside
18 County where we have the field portions of the FI-210
19 which is the Wildlife Cause and Fire Origin
20 Determination Class, fire investigators' training. So
21 we hold that out there and we have the students come
22 out and investigate each of the plots that we burn.

23 We have some other information on here
24 on some of the wildland fire jobs, the resource --
25 schedule that's maintained. To wrap up the fuels

1 presentation here is the -- we work together with
2 resources staff and others to plan and implement fuels
3 treatments where needed and try to incorporate as many
4 other objectives under the treatment as possible. We
5 have pretty good success stories with improving T&E
6 habitat and populations in our areas where we've
7 worked.

8 And just real briefly to go over the
9 report of the 2021 fuels projects. In 2021 we have
10 completed 3,668 acres so far this year, 2,789 acres in
11 Palm Springs, and 1,717 acres in Barstow. One in
12 Needles, one in the Springs, and 161 acres in
13 Ridgecrest, and there are also 340 acres treated in
14 Joshua Tree National Park.

15 Our fuels management provides fire
16 suppression personnel to take action to control
17 wildfires, contain them, and protect infrastructure
18 and private property. In 2020 there were, those
19 treatments were used to contain, control, or otherwise
20 suppress 19 fires and 4 to date so far in 2021. We
21 work closely with the inspection of the Park Service
22 and California Conservation Corps. We're using the
23 Ancestral Lands Conservation Corps which is -- on some
24 of our projects.

25 BLM partners with the Riverside County

1 Habitat Conservancy Agency, the San Bernardino Valley
2 Water Conservation District, the California Department
3 of Fish and Wildlife, California Department of
4 Forestry and Fire Protection, or CAL FIRE, --
5 Conservancy, the Friends of the Desert Mountains, the
6 -- Dunes, the Morongo Band of Mission Indians, and
7 Border Patrol in our treatments for 2020 and 2021.
8 And we have plans to expand that if we have enough
9 funding for 2022.

10 Our mitigation work as mentioned this
11 year we've completed 22 community assistance
12 activities to help communities withstanding the
13 effects of wildfires build resilience in the
14 communities to help them recover when a fire does
15 occur.

16 We've been working with CAL FIRE and
17 the Fire Safe Council in the local communities to
18 complete the Sunrise Community Fuel Break in Julian
19 and the -- Mountain Community Fuel Break -- . Both of
20 these have historically been used numerous times in
21 protected communities including the Cedar Fire which
22 was the largest fire in California history for a long
23 time. And the Esperanza Fire of 2006 that resulted in
24 fatalities.

25 The Esperanza Fire burned straight

1 towards the town of -- and -- Valley, and the only
2 impact there was one outbuilding was lost that was
3 outside of the fuels treatment and it was an abandoned
4 structure that was not occupied or used.

5 Partners in mitigation and education
6 efforts include the Greater San Diego County Fire Safe
7 Council and 26 community fire safe councils throughout
8 the county. Our largest by far mitigation and
9 education efforts have resulted in increases in fire
10 safe councils in San Diego County. And we're working
11 to expand that the rest of the district.

12 We work with the Forest Service, CAL
13 FIRE, and other local government agencies quite a bit.
14 And for fires for calendar year 2021, there have been
15 approximately 99 fires. It's gone up a little bit.
16 It's gone up to 102 now with 3 fires that are going on
17 right now that are all within a mile of BLM within our
18 response areas. So far it looks like all of those are
19 being picked up. We've had 99 fires so far this year.
20 They've burned a total of 10,8Twenty-nine acres. Of
21 these, 5,676 acres were on BLM-managed lands and 2,497
22 acres were on park lands. Many acreage was on the
23 same fires but burned either private property or
24 another agency's lands within the perimeter.

25 The largest fire we had this year was

1 the Southern Fire in San Diego County in the El Centro
2 Field Office. It burned 5,250 acres. 3,031 of those
3 were BLM, and then the largest park fire was 2,490-
4 acre Mojave Fire in the preserve. And then the 1,512-
5 acre Owens Fire in the Ridgecrest Office was the
6 largest fire that was solely on BLM-managed lands.

7 We have cooperative fire management
8 agreements with several cooperators including Imperial
9 County, Riverside County, San Bernardino County, Kern
10 County, the cities of Redlands, Apply Valley,
11 Victorville, and -- fire departments -- Forest Service
12 and --

13 MS. VAN DER LINDEN: I think we just
14 lost James.

15 MR. GANNON: You lost me?

16 MR. GIBBS: I think James is good. You
17 can continue.

18 MR. GANNON: Okay. Sorry, I didn't
19 hear what you said. And then Bureau of Indian
20 Affairs. All the fires except for the three today are
21 currently out. We'll see, check the wildfire cameras.
22 It doesn't look like they're going to be an issue, so
23 that's good. We do have -- forecasted to return on
24 Monday which could bring lightning. Hopefully it
25 brings substantial rain with it again like some of

1 these previous storms which are helping the desert
2 tortoise and other wildlife out in the Mojave
3 especially with that significant rainfall in a number
4 of areas.

5 And one last thing, it's just our
6 hiring workforce transformation. We were able to get
7 extra funding to convert two lead firefighters on BLM
8 helicopter of Apple Valley. They're year-round
9 positions. We have now lead firefighters that have
10 been added to all nine of the BLM engines. The lead
11 firefighter positions on the engines are seasonal and
12 they're guaranteed to work a minimum of six months per
13 year.

14 So we're working to increase the pay
15 level for federal firefighters, who are technically
16 Forestry Technicians, to \$15 per hour at a minimum pay
17 level and include retention incentives for many
18 existing permanent employees in the lower to mid-level
19 positions.

20 And then if additional funds become
21 available we plan to convert the lead firefighter
22 positions on the engines to year-round positions.
23 That would provide three year-round employees on each
24 engine to manage these fires we've been having year-
25 round and have enough people staffing each engine so

1 that each engine is available to -- we have certain
2 requirements on needing three people per engine --
3 staff not available. That's where we're at right now
4 with the fuels and fire programs.

5 CHAIR BANIS: I have a hand up for a
6 question from Dan Taylor.

7 MR. TAYLOR: Yes, I had a question
8 about your community assistance accomplishments on
9 your page there. I found it interesting and was
10 curious about under El Centro you show that you had
11 zero fire education events, but it was the one that
12 has the most acres treated and the most homes
13 protected. Is there a reason why there was no
14 education programs in an area that has to have the
15 most work done?

16 MR. GANNON: Yeah, there's an issue --
17 some of it's an issue with reporting. Initially the
18 Palm Springs and El Centro Offices were zoned to be
19 one zone. Some of the stuff is recorded all in Palm
20 Springs. The efforts are just -- we've got some
21 vacancies in positions and people -- out there. And
22 plus there are just not a lot of communities in
23 Imperial County.

24 By far the majority of the population
25 is in the central portion of the county in the valley

1 where there are really minimal fire activity, and not
2 really a big threat. El Centro has the area around
3 Julian. We do a lot of work there. There's been a
4 lot of -- that was one of the first community wildlife
5 protection plans that was developed was up there.

6 And the fire safe council there has
7 been fairly active over the past 20 years. We do have
8 quite a few fires in that area, but then again the
9 Southern Fire, the one that burned there, was down in
10 Anza Borrego, at the edge of Anza Borrego. And our
11 wilderness area is pretty remote.

12 But like I said we are working on
13 expanding the community assistance and mitigation and
14 education efforts. We're hoping to hire some more
15 people and we have a vacancy that just came up. And
16 we're hoping to get that person when they're hired
17 into increasing community assistance work also.

18 MR. TAYLOR: Thank you.

19 MR. GANNON: You're welcome.

20 CHAIR BANIS: Other questions? Looking
21 at the hands. That's it. No other questions. We're
22 good. Thank you.

23 MANAGER ARCHULETA: Yes, thank you
24 James. Appreciate that very busy fire and fuels
25 program. Besides you know reducing the risk of fire,

1 it's amazing the amount of habitat improvement work
2 that those projects do for endangered species as well.
3 That's it for the reports from our Field Offices,
4 Randy.

5 CHAIR BANIS: Good work. Any last
6 questions? What do folks think about skipping that
7 break and moving right through to the end? Would I
8 have any objections to that?

9 MS. POWELL: No objections.

10 CHAIR BANIS: Great. Let's keep
11 plugging right through because we've heard our public
12 comment. So the items we're onto at this time would
13 be the 4 o'clock item which we're basically back on
14 schedule with the items to consider for future
15 meetings. So the floor is open for us to rattle off
16 some things.

17 I would just advise folks to think
18 about things that would be timely for our next
19 meeting, which is October 1st and 2nd. What kind of
20 decision points or maybe seasonal or some kind of
21 activity. Also something that might pertain to the El
22 Centro area since that's where our meeting will be
23 hosted. So the floor is open. Jim, you're next.

24 MR. BAGLEY: Looking forward to going
25 to El Centro and want to see the Vinagre Wash and

1 those other issues. So I'll just let the District
2 Manager and Field Manager set that up.

3 We did have a request during the public
4 comment about the Mojave Trails. There's a concern
5 about the gem and mineral collecting. So Andrew maybe
6 you and Mike Ahrens could address that somehow.
7 That's a legitimate concern. That's a major
8 recreational use in that area, and I think we should
9 respond to the public with that.

10 And this is just a generic comment.
11 There was also a comment about the public comments not
12 being available. And I mentioned this before, you
13 know, we run public meetings in California under the
14 Brown Act, and we have requirements that agendas be
15 published 72 hours, 48 hours in advance and public
16 materials.

17 I think that's important for us to have
18 that, too, even if it doesn't meet our exact
19 guidelines. I think the materials that come out to us
20 as DAC members should be available to the public as
21 soon as possible. And I just throw that out for staff
22 to consider because that's what most people are used
23 to. And the people who live in California, that's
24 sort of the ethos they expect from a public meeting.
25 And we are the public forum for the Bureau of Land

1 Management with this advisory council.

2 MANAGER ARCHULETA: So just to follow
3 up on that, Randy, and the rest of the DAC, we are
4 sending the Field Manager Report out to all of the
5 public that was in attendance. And we're putting it
6 on the website as well.

7 MR. BAGLEY: Thank you.

8 MS. VAN DER LINDEN: And Mr. Bagley,
9 just so you're aware, the agendas are posted on the
10 website as soon the press release goes out which is
11 typically two weeks in advance of the meeting. So
12 that information is made available to the public.

13 MR. BAGLEY: Yeah. Thank you. It's
14 just the public -- trying to reach people through the
15 internet is problematic. And we got COVID-19
16 restrictions, but I'm just mentioning it. Thank you.

17 MR. BAGLEY: Billy, you've got your
18 hand up.

19 MR. MITCHELL: Yeah, Randy as far as
20 I'm concerned from the industry that I guess I
21 represent that there be something from each of the
22 area managers on that pretty much like there was
23 today.

24 And then I have one question for you.
25 Do we still have three-year terms? What is the deal?

1 I heard there was going to be you were stuck forever
2 if nobody took your place. And then I just never got
3 to the bottom of it. Do you happen to know?

4 CHAIR BANIS: Well according to the
5 website Billy, you've been drafted until January 2024.

6 MR. MITCHELL: No kidding. They better
7 hope I live that long, huh?

8 CHAIR BANIS: They renewed your
9 service, Billy.

10 MR. MITCHELL: All right. But do we
11 get renewed so often then?

12 CHAIR BANIS: Yeah. It might be your
13 second of the two terms.

14 MANAGER ARCHULETA: It's not automatic.
15 You have to re-apply when your term is up.

16 MR. MITCHELL: Oh okay. That's what I
17 was wondering. At one point I heard it was automatic.
18 Okay.

19 MR. BAGLEY: Billy, plan to hang around
20 for a long time.

21 MR. MITCHELL: All right. I will. Is
22 there any restrictions on that now? It used to be you
23 only could serve two terms. Wasn't it Randy? Back in
24 the old days.

25 CHAIR BANIS: My experience is is that

1 you'll look favorable for two consecutive terms in
2 your seat. But if you're fortunate to re-apply under
3 Public-at-Large or another seat, the Bureau will
4 consider that application. That was my case.

5 MR. MITCHELL: All right. Thank you.

6 CHAIR BANIS: Questions? Jayne, I see
7 you're up, but I don't see a hand up. Just want to
8 see if you've got anything there since you popped onto
9 the screen.

10 MS. POWELL: Oh I think it would be
11 really neat if we could have some information from
12 Ryan about the Imperial Sand Dunes Project, the
13 subcommittee, his thoughts on how to reenergize that
14 as part of our discussion for the October meeting.
15 And if there are any people that have applied
16 previously for that maybe somebody could reach out to
17 them and see if they're still interested in serving
18 and let the community know that that is being
19 reenergized.

20 CHAIR BANIS: Good. Well I expect, I'm
21 hoping Andrew will have something to us within the
22 coming weeks in general about how the subgroups will
23 start to re-form and start to have meetings. Fingers
24 crossed.

25 MANAGER ARCHULETA: Yep.

1 CHAIR BANIS: The floor is open.

2 MR. ROBINSON: Hello. I put up my
3 hand. This is Bob Robinson.

4 CHAIR BANIS: Hi, Bob. Go ahead.

5 MR. ROBINSON: This is a discussion on
6 items to consider for future meetings?

7 CHAIR BANIS: Yes.

8 MR. ROBINSON: Okay. I just brought
9 up, this time around you had issues about the
10 tortoise. And I'd like to hear more about the
11 conditions and situation with bighorn sheep.

12 CHAIR BANIS: Thank you.

13 MS. POWELL: Did you mean the peninsula
14 bighorn sheep?

15 MR. ROBINSON: Yeah. I get some
16 reports on the Navy base and it's not good. And I
17 didn't know what -- it was good they gathered up the
18 donkeys because limited water sources and since they
19 transplanted them onto the south range, they haven't
20 had any babies yet. And it's been quite a few years.

21 MR. MITCHELL: I know on the Ords,
22 Bob's not here, but on the Ords they issued six
23 permits this year to take them. The last time I was
24 up there they looked really, really good. The sheep
25 were doing good, the Newberrys and the Ords.

1 MR. ROBINSON: They're doing okay on
2 the Sierras, also. The Sierra bighorn are hanging in
3 there. But out in the desert here from our area and
4 the north area they're not doing well at all.

5 MR. MITCHELL: I'll be darned. Well I
6 do know donkeys will hold them off of water. They
7 hold cattle off of water if you've got a strong herd.
8 I've seen that before. It happened on the valley
9 wells, probably even out at Dixie Dawson where Jay
10 Moon is now. I've seen it on both of those ranches
11 happen before before they got them all gathered up.

12 MR. ROBINSON: Yeah. The donkey
13 populations I think are causing a lot of problems with
14 them here. There's not very many water sources, and
15 they kind of take over the water holes.

16 MR. MITCHELL: All right. Thank you.

17 MR. ROBINSON: All right. Take care.

18 CHAIR BANIS: The floor is open for
19 items for future agendas. 3, 2, 1.

20 MR. BAGLEY: Randy, what about meetings
21 beyond El Centro? Do you have a game plan for that?

22 MS. POWELL: I thought we put a
23 calendar together tentatively previously. Maybe
24 somebody has that on hand so we could write those down
25 for those whose calendars went away.

1 CHAIR BANIS: I have October 1 and 2 of
2 course. And then I also have February 11 and 12.

3 MS. VAN DER LINDEN: That is correct,
4 Randy.

5 CHAIR BANIS: And did we go on to
6 April, or is that it? I think that was it.

7 MANAGER ARCHULETA: I think the idea
8 was that we were going to finish out this year and get
9 one into next year to start.

10 CHAIR BANIS: That's right. We had
11 talked about four meetings and the June one was just
12 too quick. And that one went by us. So now we've got
13 three left into February. And then after the February
14 that's the new year, the new election, the new term,
15 the new cycle. So there's only two on our calendar,
16 that's October 1st and 2nd in El Centro, February 11th
17 and 12th I don't have a location. Did you guys have
18 something in mind at the BLM for February?

19 MS. VAN DER LINDEN: February is
20 scheduled to be Barstow if we're back in person.

21 CHAIR BANIS: Okay.

22 MR. MITCHELL: I'd rather it be in
23 person myself.

24 CHAIR BANIS: I'll take anywhere in
25 person.

1 MANAGER ARCHULETA: That's the goal
2 right now.

3 CHAIR BANIS: Well very good. The next
4 item on the agenda is really just a wrap up. Andrew,
5 if you have some comments for wrapping up and we'd be
6 happy to hear them.

7 MANAGER ARCHULETA: You know it's a
8 long day to sit in front of the computer. I think
9 when I first came in I said I'm a field guy and I
10 still am a field guy. And so sitting here in front of
11 the computer for a full day is a struggle for me. So
12 you probably saw me squirming around and moving a lot,
13 but it was a good day, some good discussion.

14 I really appreciate the great
15 questions, the good comments. We definitely always
16 take them into consideration. And I also really want
17 to thank the public. The public comment that we got
18 is always great. Some really good reminders about
19 things that we need to be considering as we move
20 forward managing the desert. So just really
21 appreciative of everybody's input and just hanging in
22 there for the long day. So thank you all very much.
23 Randy?

24 CHAIR BANIS: You know, I want to thank
25 everybody. My fellow colleagues here, Jayne and Jim

1 and Bob and Dan, you guys really had the best
2 questions of the day. You kept everything really hard
3 and focused and got us some great answer. Paul, I'd
4 love to talk to you about OHV safety with the kids and
5 desert safety. You know Dan and I get to see each
6 other every month. I'll be talking to you in a couple
7 of weeks for the El Mirage meetings.

8 And great to see Dick back on the
9 board. I do miss you all and looking forward to
10 getting to know Jayne and Paul better. I think
11 October is going to be a go in person and I think
12 we're going to have a really great time. I think
13 we're going to have a great schedule. And the breaks
14 and the lunches are a lot more fun when we get to
15 share those together as well as the meetings. So with
16 that, if there's no further comments then I'll adjourn
17 this meeting at 4:22. Look at that, a couple of
18 minutes early.

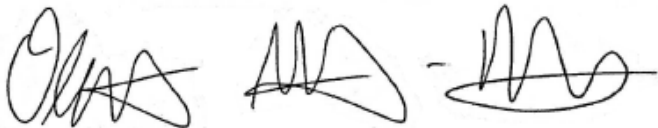
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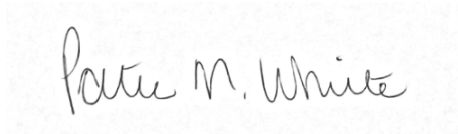
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Dated: 8/20/2021



PATRICIA WHITE

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[amount - approved]

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[conclusion - cooperative]

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[cooperatives - critical]

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[declined - development]

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[documenting - early]

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