



**Field Office and Fire and Fuel Reports  
Desert Advisory Council**

October 2021

## Barstow Field Office (BFO)



*Photo: Dumont Dunes*

### *Archaeology and Cultural Resources*

#### **Calico Early Man Site**

**BLM Action:** The BLM plans to remediate the remnant archaeological excavation and study features of the Calico Early Man Site as they pose a significant threat to on-site public safety. The method of remediation (e.g., installation of cupolas / air gates, backfilling, removal, etc.) for each of the features depends on both the historic significance of that feature and its potential threat to human health and safety. Once the public safety issues are remediated, the site will be re-opened to the public for self-guided tours.

**Status:** The Decision Record and Finding of No Significant Impact was issued on August 30, 2021. The remediation actions will be implemented in FY22 via contract.

**BLM Contacts:** Jim Shearer, Archaeologist; Jeff Childers, Associate Field Manager; and Katrina Symons, Field Manager

#### **West Mojave Route Network Project 2015 Programmatic Agreement**

**BLM Action:** The BLM continues to implement the 2015 Programmatic Agreement for the West Mojave Route Network Project.

Status: For FY21, implementation actions included completion of 1,549 acres of Class III cultural resource surveys; hosting two consulting party virtual meetings (March 17 and September 15, 2021); preparing FY20 site documentation, evaluation, and a report; development of the evaluation plan through a contractor; and requesting FY22 funding for Model Analysis and Class I Literature Review (required every 5-years).

BLM Contacts: Jim Shearer, Archaeologist; Tiffany Arend, CDD Archaeologist; and Katrina Symons, Field Manager

## *Lands and Realty*

### **Land Use Permits**

BLM Action: Issuing land use permits and letters of authorization.

Partners: Inland Empire Film Services

Status: For FY21, a total of 33 film permits and two research / development permits (SpaceX and Ford) were administered by field office staff. The field office also issued nine letters of authorization. The most popular land use permit locations included El Mirage, Johnson Valley, and Dumont Dunes OHV Recreation Areas.

BLM Contacts: Birgit Hoover, Realty Specialist and Michael Marks, Realty Specialist

## *Recreation*

### **Johnson Valley Off Highway Vehicle Recreation Area**

BLM Action: The National Defense Authorization Act of 2014 authorized the Marine Corps to utilize the Johnson Valley Shared Use Area (SUA) for two 30-day periods annually during which time the area would be closed to the public. The BLM manages the SUA for the remaining 10-months each year.

Partners: Marine Corps Air Ground Combat Center

Status: A joint pre- and post-use inspection of the SUA occurred for the military training that took place from April 30 to May 10, 2021, with no issues identified.

The Marine Corps plans to utilize the SUA in calendar years 2021-2022 during the periods of October 22 to November 1, 2021, April 26 to May 9, 2022, and October 18 to November 1, 2022. During these training periods, the SUA will be temporarily closed to the public, but the adjacent Johnson Valley OHV Recreation Area will remain open. The Marines issue a news release as they control when the area is open or closed for military training and the Barstow webpage links to the latest information on Johnson Valley closures.

BLM Contact: Katrina Symons, Field Manager

## **Special Recreation Permits**

BLM Action: Issuing special recreation permits for a variety of recreation activities and vending.

Status: For FY21, a total of 176 Special Recreation Permits (SRP) were administered by field office staff. SRPs included vending and a variety of recreation events (e.g., sprint enduro, navigational, car / truck race, speed timing trials, hare and hound, sand drags, dual sport ride, poker run), most of which were motorized race events, and several were multi-event permits. The field office has also issued seven letters of agreement for various events (e.g., wedding, Boy Scout outing...).

BLM Contacts: Chailenn Young, Outdoor Recreation Planner; Cecilia Franklin, Outdoor Recreation Planner; Nathan Bingham, Outdoor Recreation Planner; and David Kotlarski, Assistant Field Manager

## *Renewable Energy and Transmission*

### **Sunbaked and Cady Solar Energy Project**

BLM Action: The BLM received right-of-way applications from NextEra Energy Resources for two solar plant locations; one proposed site is near Chicago Valley in Inyo County and the other is in the Pisgah area in San Bernardino County.

Status: Two pre-application meetings have been held. The applicant is planning a pre-application meeting with the consulting parties.

BLM Contact: Amy Schow, Realty Specialist

### **EDF Renewable Wind Testing Project**

BLM Action: The BLM received applications from EDF Renewables to place four meteorological wind testing towers in the Johnson Valley area in San Bernardino County.

Status: Cultural and biological clearance surveys have been completed. National Environmental Policy Act documentation is being prepared.

BLM Contact: Amy Schow, Realty Specialist

## *Wildlife*

### **Amargosa Vole Demographic and Disease Study, Habitat Enhancement and Population Augmentation Program**

BLM Action: A multi-year study of the Amargosa vole in the Tecopa area is being conducted to determine the extent of disease, vole genetics, and vole habitat needs. A captive breeding effort

has also been established. These studies have provided information to help guide management actions and prevent the extinction of this highly vulnerable species.

Partners: California Department of Fish and Wildlife (CDFW), Inyo County Road Department, Purdue University, US Geological Service, University of California (UC) Davis, University of California Berkeley and United States Fish and Wildlife Service

Status: UC Davis / CDFW initiated a range-wide survey of the Amargosa vole this spring / summer. Initial results are concerning due to low numbers of individuals present, which are likely drought related. Surveys will continue into the fall of 2021.

The Barstow Field Office (BFO) received funding to initiate a “mega-marsh” project with our partners at UC Davis, this project will ultimately lead to the creation of a large marsh complex near “Borehole Marsh” to serve as a refugia / breeding site; this is a multi-year endeavor.

After several years of preparation, a marsh has been restored on adjacent private lands and was successfully repopulated with Amargosa voles. This is the first-time voles have been present in this marsh for over 120 years. Monitoring is continuing and potential additional supplementations are being considered.

The BFO continues to work with the Inyo County Road Department to install a weir at the outflow of “Borehole Marsh.” A second phase of the installation is scheduled for the end of September. Once this project is completed, the structure will allow the BFO to manage the site more efficiently.

UC Davis continues to maintain the captive breeding colony to serve as an insurance population.

The Amargosa Vole Team was awarded the 2020 Recovery Champion Award from the USFWS.

BLM Contact: Chris Otahal, Wildlife Biologist

### **Amargosa River Monitoring Studies / Management Actions**

BLM Action: The BFO is involved in various monitoring studies / management actions associated with the Amargosa River including:

- Amargosa niterwort population monitoring
- sensitive bird species spot mapping / Cowbird Management Program
- tamarisk control efforts
- SCAN monitoring
- fish monitoring
- hydrology studies including US Geological Survey stream gauges
- habitat restoration
- endangered plant studies
- spring studies

Partners: Amargosa Conservancy, California Department of Fish and Wildlife,

California Department of Transportation (CalTrans), The Nature Conservancy, Point Blue Conservation Science, National Fish and Wildlife Foundation, Natural Resources Conservation Service, Rancho Santa Ana Botanic Garden, United States Fish and Wildlife Service, and US Geological Survey

Status: The BFO continues to implement tamarisk management on the Amargosa River and has treated approximately 20 acres in 2021. Staff are working on developing a burn plan to treat a large stand of tamarisk which is not suitable for treatment through other means.

The BFO is working with Point Blue Conservation Science to conduct the 17<sup>th</sup> year of long-term bird monitoring efforts. Funding has been secured to continue this work in 2022 as well.

The BFO established eight Assessment, Inventory and Monitoring (AIM) study sites on the Amargosa River this year. AIM is the BLM's standardized monitoring methodology.

Volunteers from Adventure Scientists began collecting water samples for analysis as part of their national Wild and Scenic Rivers Program.

Our partners at Rancho Santa Ana Botanic Garden are continuing their rare plant survey / mapping effort this year.

The BFO completed the implementation of the Bring Back the Natives Grant from the National Fish and Wildlife Foundation in May 2021. This completes a project which was initiated in 2018 to improve habitat for the Amargosa pupfish and other riparian dependent species. Over 650 trees were planted through a partnership with the BLM West Mojave Native Plants program and Victor Valley Community College. The BFO is also working with CalTrans to implement additional plantings in the vicinity of this project.

In April 2021, there was a fire on the Amargosa River near China Ranch involving 31.8 acres (8.8 acres on BLM-managed lands, 23.0 acres on private lands) of prime Least Bell's Vireo habitat. The BFO is monitoring the situation and is working with our partners on habitat recovery efforts.

BLM Contact: Chris Otahal, Wildlife Biologist

### **Afton Canyon Wildlife Habitat Enhancement Efforts**

BLM Action: The BFO is continuing a focused wildlife habitat enhancement program on the Afton Canyon portion of the Mojave Trails National Monument, which is largely modeled on the successful program associated with the Amargosa River Wild and Scenic River. The section of the Mojave River flowing through the Afton Canyon Area of Critical Environmental Concern (ACEC) is currently considered "eligible" under the National Wild and Scenic River Act and is managed to maintain the scenic, recreational, geologic, fish and wildlife, historic, and cultural outstanding and remarkable values on which this determination was based. The canyon has also been designated a Watchable Wildlife Area due to its high biodiversity as reflected by the 180 bird species utilizing the region. The BFO is collecting data to help in the development of the

management plan for the Mojave Trails National Monument.

Partners: 3M Corporation, Amargosa Conservancy Point Blue, California Alliance for Tamarisk Biocontrol, California Department of Fish and Wildlife, California Institute of Technology, Living Desert Zoo and Gardens, Mojave Desert Land Trust, Oregon State University, Princeton University, Townson University, University of California, Santa Barbara, and United States Geological Survey (USGS)

Status: The BFO has been working with the Mojave Desert Land Trust to implement the Women in Science Discovering the Desert (WISDOM) program. Through WISDOM, minority female interns are recruited to collect resource data (bighorn sheep, tamarisk beetle, bird, and Night Skies) from Afton Canyon to enhance their training in Science, Technology, Engineering, and Math (STEM). The BFO received funding to continue tamarisk beetle studies in 2022 associated with this program.

The BFO, through the Fire and Fuels Program, has continued with tamarisk treatments within Afton Canyon and approximately 200 acres of tamarisk were treated / re-treated this year.

The BFO continues to work with our partners at USGS and The Living Desert to develop a captive breeding / re-introduction program for the Southwestern Pond Turtle in Afton Canyon.

The BFO continues to work with Southern California Edison and Brightline to conduct restoration projects in Afton Canyon which will integrate with other on-going restoration efforts.

The BFO is working with researchers from the California Institute of Technology to deploy a research project looking at natural methane emissions as it relates to climate change. Afton Canyon will be one of the study sites.

BLM Contact: Chris Otahal, Wildlife Biologist

### **Desert Tortoise Recovery Implementation Team Activities**

BLM Action: The BFO is cooperating with the Desert Tortoise Recovery Office of the United States Fish and Wildlife Service to implement the Desert Tortoise Recovery Plan. The BFO is providing representation for the BLM on the West Mojave Recovery Implementation Team (RIT) to set recovery action priorities.

Partners: United States Fish and Wildlife Service and various county, state, and federal agencies

Status: The RIT has been meeting on a regular basis and the current focus is on discussions relating to fencing along roads and highways.

BLM Contact: Chris Otahal, Wildlife Biologist

*Other / Misc.*

**Apple Valley NCCP/HCP Development**

BLM Action: The BFO is working with the Town of Apple Valley and associated permitting agencies on their development of the city's Natural Community Conservation Plan / Habitat Conservation Plan (NCCP/HCP). The BLM's main interest in this process is to work with the Town of Apple Valley to best determine how the NCCP/HCP mitigation requirements can work hand-in-hand with the BLM's management of the surrounding area consistent with the California Desert Conservation Area Plan, as amended.

Partners: California Department of Fish and Wildlife, Town of Apple Valley, and United States Fish and Wildlife Service

Status: The town is nearing its target date for completion of the NCCP/HCP and the BFO is engaged in coordination meetings to facilitate this effort.

BLM Contact: Chris Otahal, Wildlife Biologist

**Amargosa Wild and Scenic River Comprehensive River Management Plan**

BLM Action: Development of the Amargosa Wild and Scenic River Comprehensive River Management Plan (CRMP)

Status: The scoping period for the development of the Amargosa River CRMP ended on June 1, 2021. Twelve letters were received, and BLM is considering the substantive comments in the formulation of the Draft CRMP/Environmental Assessment (EA). BLM anticipates the Draft CRMP/EA to be available for public review the first quarter of FY22.

BLM Contacts: Chris Otahal, Wildlife Biologist



## El Centro Field Office (ECFO)



*Photo: Bedrock Mortars in Jacumba Mountains Wilderness*

### *Minerals and Mining*

#### **Coyote II Pit Free Use Permit**

BLM Action: On August 30, 2021, the BLM completed a Categorical Exclusion (CX) for a Free Use Permit renewal at the Coyote II pit located near the town of Ocotillo in Imperial County. The FUP authorizes the use of mineral materials for road maintenance work within McCain Valley. The FUP issued a total of 20,000 cubic yards of mineral materials to be mined over a five-year period.

Status: Road maintenance at McCain Valley was completed on August 31, 2021. Production from the Coyote II pit will continue when demand warrants.

BLM Contact: Mayra Martinez, Geologist

## *Recreation*

### **ISDRA Fee Collection Contract**

BLM Action: The BLM and Urban Park Concessionaires Gate Services are working together on the Imperial Sand Dune Recreation Area Fee Collection for FY 2022. Permits will be available for purchase online at <https://www.isdpermits.net/> as well as at many 3rd party vendors (gas stations, motorcycle dealerships, etc.) throughout southern California and Arizona as well as at Cahuilla and Buttercup Ranger Stations.

Partners: BLM and Urban Park Concessionaires

Status: Active; in the FY21 season, 8,133 Season Permits and 73,021 Weekly Permits were sold.

BLM Contact: John Johnson, Environmental Protection Specialist (Wilderness Coordinator)

### **Travel and Transportation Management / Off-Highway Vehicle Trails / Non-Motorized Trails**

BLM Action: Staff continue to improve the Juan Bautista de Anza (JBDA) National Historic Trail, Pacific Crest Trail (PCT), and Vinagre Wash Special Management Area trails. New interpretive wayside panels have been installed at the Kwaaymii Point Overlook on the PCT and two new panels are being installed on the JBDA at the Yuha Overlook and the Yuha Well in September. OHV trail signing continues in the Vinagre Special Management Area throughout the summer. The refurbished facilities improve recreational opportunities for the increased level of visitors and enhance experiences on public lands.

Partners: National Park Service, Anza Society, California State Parks Off Highway Motor Vehicle Division, Pacific Crest Trail Association, and local Tribes

Status: Work continues on a weekly basis.

BLM Contact: Neil Hamada, Supervisory Outdoor Recreation Planner

### **Special Recreation Permits**

BLM Action: The BLM works with dozens of applicants to permit recreation activities such as off-road races, vending of goods and services, navigation training, poker runs, etc. on public lands. Special Recreation Permits (SRP) can enhance the visitor experience and promote safe and healthy outdoor recreation and provide an excellent opportunity for family and friends to connect and are especially popular in the cooler winter months at the ISDRA, Plaster City Special Recreation Management Area (SRMA), and Superstition Mountain SRMA. In addition to SRPs, BLM issues Letters of Agreement for events that do not require a permit such as weddings or small camping events. Relationships with some of the permittees have yielded opportunities for partnerships, such as Adopt-a-Trail or organized trash cleanups.

Partners: Tierra Del Sol Four-Wheel Drive Club, SDMUST, San Diego Off-Road Coalition

Status: Active; in FY21, 46 SRPs have been approved and eight Letters of Agreement were issued.

BLM Contact: Alexia Williams, Outdoor Recreation Planner

## *Renewable Energy and Transmission*

### **East Mesa Solar and Green Hydrogen Facility Renewable Energy Project**

BLM Action: IP Land Holdings, LLC has submitted an updated application to its proposed 2,500 MW solar energy and hydrogen electrolyzer facility on public lands designated as Development Focus Areas (DFA) under the Desert Renewable Energy and Conservation Plan (DRECP) in eastern Imperial County. Based on coordination with the Department of Defense, the applicant has shifted a portion of the proposed project location from public lands north of Hwy 78, just west of the Imperial Sand Dunes to lands designated as a geothermal only DFA, north of I-8 in and adjacent to the existing Ormat Geothermal Plant (geothermal lease on public lands). The project will consist of arrays of solar photovoltaic panels and appurtenant facilities. The project would construct a new gen-tie and high-voltage substation or interconnect to existing transmission line. In addition, the project would include a green hydrogen electrolyzer to convert water into H<sub>2</sub> gas.

The project is currently being reviewed as a BLM California priority project. The BLM anticipates preparing an Environmental Impact Statement pursuant to the National Environmental Policy Act.

Partners: Imperial County Planning and Development Services

Status: The project is in the initial review stages and the application has yet to be deemed complete. The ECFO is currently reviewing the updated site proposal and considering its compatibility with the DRECP and DFA geothermal only land use allocation.

BLM Contact: Tristan Riddell, Realty Specialist

## *Wildlife*

### **San Sebastian Marsh Post and Cable Repair**

BLM Action: On September 8, 2021, the ECFO repaired three sections of barrier made of posts and cables designed to protect San Sebastian Marsh, a marsh complex containing designated critical habitat for the endangered desert pupfish (*Cyprinodon macularis*). These barriers were originally put in place to help control unauthorized vehicle incursion into the marsh; one of the primary threats to the pupfish. Years of flooding, erosion, and vehicle incursions have damaged these barriers to the point of inefficacy. Posts had washed away and become buried, and cables had been severed, buried, or had corroded and deteriorated.

BLM maintenance staff were able to complete two days of repair work in a single day. The posts were excavated and reinstalled, and damaged sections of cable were removed and replaced. Additionally, ECFO has begun replacing faded and damaged signs along the road running south of the marsh that describe the limited use restrictions of the area. This project supports the shared goals of the BLM, CDFW, and USFWS to conserve and restore San Sebastian Marsh to enable desert pupfish recovery.

Partners: U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, California Department of Fish and Wildlife

Status: The post and cable repair work were completed on September 8, 2021 and closure signs will continue to be replaced along the road to better eliminate confusion and reduce unauthorized vehicle incursions.

BLM Contact: Peter DeJongh, Wildlife Biologist

*Other / Misc.*

### **US Marines Helicopter Mishap / Salton Sea Test Base**

BLM Action: ECFO coordinated with the US Navy and US Marine Corps in the removal of the downed helicopter on BLM lands. The Marines were on a night landing training exercise when the CH-53 helicopter broke a skid and was not flyable. They notified BLM and a CX was developed for the work needed to access and remove the helicopter from public lands. Unfortunately, the US Marines completed the work before the CX was completed. The helicopter landed and broke within the Salton Sea Test Base ACEC which is closed to everyone including the military. Cost recovery, site mitigation measures and the development of an SOP to plan for future aircraft mishaps on public lands was agreed upon by the US Navy, US Marine Corps and the BLM to insure better communications and roles and responsibilities for future incidents.

Partners: US Navy, US Marine Corps, BLM ECFO

Status: A Categorical Exclusion is in process of being signed. Future meetings will discuss the development of a coordinated drafting of the SOP to address future incidents.

BLM Contacts: Carrie Sahagun, Supervisory Resource Management Specialist and Dale Ohnmeiss, Planning and Environmental Specialist

### **DHS/USACE Border Fence Construction Coordination**

BLM Action: ECFO coordinated with the Department of Homeland Security/Customs and Border Protection (CBP) and the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers (USACE) over the past two-plus years on Border Fence/Infrastructure construction. Approximately 19 miles of new border fence and ancillary facilities were installed in western Imperial County through the Yuha Desert and Jacumba Mountains Wilderness Area. Ancillary facilities include permanent and temporary

access roads, drainage infrastructure, and lighting. On January 20, 2021, President Joseph R. Biden issued a presidential proclamation rescinding President Donald Trump's national emergency declaration, which diverted \$10 billion in Defense Department funds toward the border infrastructure project. The presidential proclamation also directed all private contractors to stop work on the project within seven days of the proclamation. USACE ensured the site was left in a work safe condition and all project activities have been halted.

Partners: CBP and USACE

Status: At the request of the Department of Interior and in coordination with the BLM's Southwest Border Coordinator, Lucas Lucero, the ECFO has prepared an independent cost estimate for restoration activities related to remaining temporary construction disturbance at the project site. CBP is also gathering data related to remaining disturbance and potential mitigation/restoration needs.

BLM Contacts: Tristan Riddell, Realty Specialist and Carrie Sahagun, Supervisory Resource Management Specialist

### **Emergency Medical Services**

BLM Action: BLM has hired two additional advanced EMT's to provide medical services to ISDRA visitors. Additional grant funding will allow for hiring of additional EMS providers for the 2021-2022 season. Outreach and announcements for these additional positions are in progress. EMS calls for service increased during the peak of the Covid period in 2020-2021.

Partners: Imperial County EMS, AMR, Reach, Mercy, Surrounding Hospitals

Status: ECFO is prepared to provide coverage this dune season, with additional staff and local office staff training. Supplies have been ordered, and the permanent full-time EMS staff are ready to open the ranger stations on or before October 15.

BLM Contact: Eric Solomon, Supervisory Outdoor Recreation Planner

### **Road Repair / Recreation Area Improvements**

BLM Actions: This past summer, the ECFO completed several major road improvements and repaired major storm damage in multiple areas. These areas include Lower and Upper Lark Canyon, Grey's Well, Wash Road, San Sebastian, Gecko Road, and Roadrunner Campground. Monsoon storms created erosion and washouts making some roads impassible until repaired. Crews completed the repairs quickly and continue to monitor following each precipitation event. Road repairs in recreation areas allow for more comfortable road conditions and access to recreation sites.

Status: Field employees continue to monitor road and recreation site conditions and report needed repairs to staff. Major repairs and improvements have been completed by ECFO maintenance staff.

BLM Contact: Eric Solomon, Supervisory Outdoor Recreation Planner

## Needles Field Office (NFO)



*Photo: Chemehuevi Mountains Wilderness*

### *Lands and Realty*

#### **Federal Aviation Administration Yucca Grove Restoration**

BLM Action: The Federal Aviation Administration (FAA) submitted a restoration plan to restore their microwave repeater communication site. The facility had been removed; however, the site was not restored to BLM standards. The FAA will be recontouring the lands per guidance from the BLM and US Geological Survey (USGS).

Partners: BLM and USGS will be meeting with FAA contractors on the first day of restoration to provide guidance on recontouring.

Status: The BLM's interdisciplinary team completed their review, a NEPA categorical exclusion has been completed and on July 29, 2021, a decision was issued to allow the restoration to be completed. The BLM will be coordinating with the FAA to monitor the restoration activity.

BLM Contact: John Russell Hansen, Realty Specialist

#### **Castle Mountain Short-Term Water Pipeline**

BLM Action: Castle Mountain Venture (CMV) has applied for a short-term use right-of-way (STU-ROW) for a temporary water pipeline and access road (on an existing railroad access route) for the purpose of discharging water from a well pump test located on private lands. The water discharge would occur in an existing ephemeral drainage channel located on public lands and 1/3 of mile northwest of the town of Nipton. The drainage is expected to have negligible disturbance on public lands.

Status: NEPA (categorical exclusion) was completed for this action and the decision to authorize the activity was issued on September 13, 2021. This temporary project should begin by the end of the month and all temporary facilities would be removed by October 31, 2021.

BLM Contact: John Russell Hansen, Realty Specialist

### **The City of Twentynine Palms Tourism Filming Project**

BLM Action: The City of Twentynine Palms is a Gateway Community to the Mojave Trails National Monument (MTNM) and the city's tourism organization has requested to use MTNM as a backdrop for promotional filming. The city seeks to highlight some of the area found in the NFO portion of the MTNM.

Partner: The City of Twentynine Palms Tourism

Status: Currently working with the film crew and NFO staff to locate filming locations.

BLM Contact: Noelle Glines Bovio, MTNM Monument Manager

### **Cox Comb Communication Site Amendment**

BLM Action: Verizon Wireless has applied to amend their existing communication site lease for the purpose of installing additional solar panels at their facility.

Status: The BLM's interdisciplinary team is working to finalize their review and determine the appropriate level of NEPA.

BLM Contact: John Russell Hansen, Realty Specialist

### **Mojave Desert Lands Trust Temporary Access**

BLM Action: The Mojave Desert Lands Trust (MDLT) has submitted an application for a STU-ROW on an existing open route for the purpose of accessing a private land parcel requiring remediation work. The project also requires maintenance and reconstruction of a utility access right-of-way (ROW).

Status: MDLT is coordinating a maintenance agreement with the ROW holder. The BLM's interdisciplinary team is currently reviewing the proposed action and determining if there are any resource concerns with the proposed action. The interdisciplinary team is expected to complete their review by October 4, 2021.

BLM Contact: John Russell Hansen, Realty Specialist

### **Brightline West High-Speed Train, Ivanpah Substation**

BLM Action: BLM is considering an application to construct, operate, and maintain an electric



highspeed train from Victorville to Las Vegas by Brightline West. As a part of that approval a substation, converter station, and transmission line will need to be constructed near Ivanpah Dry Lake. BLM has determined that the current NEPA previously prepared by the Federal Railroad Administration is not adequate to authorize these facilities. BLM NFO will complete a separate EA to consider the facilities authorization.

Partners: Proponents of the project are FRA Brightline West, Southern California Edison (SCE).

Status: BLM is awaiting a complete Plan of Development from Brightline West and SCE.

BLM Contacts: John Russell Hansen, Realty Specialist, Mike Ahrens, Field Manager

### *Minerals & Mining*

#### **Castle Mountain Mine Modification to Plan of Operation**

BLM Action: Castle Mountain Mine (CMM) submitted a plan modification for water well installation and testing. Test wells would be within existing footprints of recently completed monitoring wells.

Partners: BLM continues to facilitate collaboration and consultation with NPS as necessary.

Status: BLM is drafting a Determination of NEPA Adequacy based on recent revisions and data submitted by CMM following BLM's initial review.

BLM Contacts: Mitch Owens, Assistant Field Manager, Bill Webster, Planning and Environmental Coordinator, and Rose Pettiette, Geologist

### *Recreation*

#### **Ivanpah Windsailing Special Recreation Management Area Access**

BLM Action: The Needles Field Office is addressing OHV intrusion issues on the dry lakebed by adding post and cable fencing to boundaries, installing new gates, and addressing and improving the access road.

Partners: There are several interested volunteers and windsailing groups who desire to be included in the effort. A California Off-Highway Vehicle Recreation Division grant has been approved to fund a portion of the project.

Status: Initial resource survey work has begun, along with initial conceptual planning.

BLM Contacts: Ramona Daniels and David Roan, Outdoor Recreation Planners

## **Mojave Trails National Monument / Route 66 National Scenic Byway Needles to Barstow**

BLM Action: Staff from the BLM California Desert District, NFO, Mojave Trails National Monument, San Bernardino County, and California Historic Route 66 Association are working on formalizing a memorandum of understanding on partnership responsibilities. This will help formalize a working group with the focus on U.S Route 66 National Scenic Byway.

Partners: California Historic Route 66 Association and San Bernardino County

Status: Working on the draft MOU.

BLM Contact: Noelle Glines Bovio, MTNM Monument Manager

## **Ivanpah Windsailing SRMA Recreation Area Management Plan (RAMP)**

BLM Action: The Needles Field Office is developing a Recreation Area Management Plan for the Ivanpah Windsailing Special Recreation Management Area. The staff has identified both immediate and future action items to be addressed within the plan. The plan will address, access, staging, facilities, controlled access, and the possibility of an access fee.

Partners: There are several interested volunteers and windsailing groups who desire to be included in the planning effort.

Status: Initial resource survey work has begun, along with initial conceptual planning.

BLM Contacts: Ramona Daniels and David Roan, Outdoor Recreation Planners

## **Amboy Trail and Sign Planning**

BLM Action: The NFO, to enhance recreation opportunities at Amboy Crater National Natural Landmark, proposes to add a trail network consisting of a series of looped trails (eight to 10 new trails). These looped trails would range from short-to-long in duration to provide a hiking experience for different skill levels. New signing is also being developed to warn and educate visitors about hiking in the extreme heat, the importance of packing water, and the time of year to avoid hiking in the area due to extreme heat conditions. Other signing would include maps and trail signs.

Status: Conceptual planning phase, have begun an internal review.

BLM Contacts: Ramona Daniels Outdoor Recreation Planner, Mitch Owens Assistant Field Manager

## *Wildlife*

### **Desert Stateline Solar Mitigation**

BLM Action: The NFO and Fish and Wildlife Service (FWS) have identified a project that can be completed by Desert Stateline Solar Farm (DSSF) as mitigation for resource impacts caused by the construction of their solar facility. NFO and the Mojave National Preserve (MNP) had previously agreed with DSSF to conduct their mitigation within the MNP by installing 13.1 miles of desert tortoise fencing on each side of Morning Star Mine Road. This was later determined to not be feasible due to the multiple washes along the roadside as well as flooding events which would cause heavy destruction to the fence line rendering it useless.

Currently the NFO has a pending project involving construction of desert tortoise fencing along Goffs Road. The goal is to create a barrier using tortoise fencing along both sides of Goffs Road, starting at Hwy 95, and moving west until the intersection of Goffs Road with I-40. This section of road is 24.5 miles in length, entirely within critical desert tortoise habitat, and the entire southern side of the road and the northeastern half are within the MTNM; the second half of the northwestern side of the road is within the MNP.

Partners: USFWS, Mohave National Preserve, and Desert Stateline Solar Farm

Status: Alternative Development, Internal Review, Beginning of NEPA Process.

BLM Contacts: Justin Saiz, Wildlife Biologist

### *Other/Misc.*

### **Mojave Trails National Monument Planning Update**

BLM Action: BLM has reengaged in the Mojave Trails National Monument (MTNM) planning process.

Status: MTNM has requested funds through the Collaborative Action and Dispute Resolution program. The funds will be used to assist the monument manager with information gathering, fact sheets, facilitation support, and presentation design for public listening sessions. These activities will support public engagement before we evaluate how the BLM restarts the planning process.

BLM Contact: Noelle Glines-Bovio, Mojave Trails National Monument Manager

## **Palm Springs-South Coast Field Office (PSSCFO)**



*Photo: Santa Rosa and Sand Jacinto Mountains Windmills*

### ***Renewable Energy and Transmission***

The Palm Springs South Coast Field Office (PSSCFO) manages over three dozen individual operational and proposed energy development projects. Updates are provided for those projects that have changed since August 2021.

#### **Crimson Solar Project**

BLM Action: Completing authorization of requested need, followed by monitoring compliance of construction.

Partners: Sonoran West Holdings, LLC and Recurrent Energy, LLC

Status: The BLM has issued a right-of-way (ROW) grant to Sonoran West Holding, LLC for the battery storage system, substation, access roads, and an operations and maintenance building and is expected to issue a ROW grant for the solar photovoltaic facilities within the next month. BLM issued a notice to proceed September 21, 2021, with construction commencing on the battery storage facility September 22, 2021.

BLM Contacts: John Dalton, PSSC Team Leader - Renewable Energy Support Team, and Brandon G. Assistant District Manager, Project Support

### **Arica Solar Project (formerly SunPower, now Clearway)**

BLM Action: Processing request

Partners: Clearway

Status: SunPower Corporation filed a ROW application in summer 2016, for a 400 Mega Watt (MW) Photo Voltaic (PV) solar energy project on roughly 4,000 acres of public lands within Development Focus Areas (DFA) near Desert Center and submitted a Plan of Development on November 21, 2016. The BLM hosted a pre-application meeting with SunPower (the previous applicant) on November 21, 2016. Clearway is now the applicant for this project going forward. The project would consist of a 265 MW solar PV facility located eight miles east of the I-10 and SR 177 intersection with 50 MW storage capacity. The project would include two substations and 3.2 miles of 230kV gen-tie from the switchyard to the existing Red Bluff Substation.

The BLM released the Environmental Assessment in August 2021 and in September, initiated National Historic Preservation Act consultation with Tribes and the State Historic Preservation Office endangered species as well as Endangered Species Act consultation with the with the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service (FWS).

BLM Contacts: John Dalton, PSSC Team Leader - Renewable Energy Support Team, and Carrie Woods, Project Manager

### **Victory Pass Solar**

BLM Action: Processing request

Partners: Clearway Solar (formerly Jupiter, now Clearway)

Status: Jupiter Solar filed a ROW application on July 6, 2015, for a PV project on roughly 1,800 acres of public lands within DFA near the Desert Center area. Clearway is now the applicant for this project going forward. The project consists of a 200 MW PV project located eight miles east of the I-10 and SR 177 intersection with an optional 50 MW battery storage.

The BLM released the Environmental Assessment in August 2021, and the 30-day comment period ended September 7, 2021. Tribal and SHPO consultation and endangered species consultation w/US FWS, initiated in September 2021.

BLM Contacts: John Dalton, PSSC Team Leader - Renewable Energy Support Team, and Carrie Woods, Project Manager

## **Oberon Solar**

BLM Action: Processing request

Partners: Intersect Power

Status: Intersect Power filed a ROW application on September 5, 2019, for a PV project on roughly 6,000 acres of public lands within the DFA near the Desert Center area, the proposed project area was reduced to 2,700 acres. The project currently consists of a 500 MW PV facility located eight miles east of the I-10 and SR 177 intersection with an optional battery storage.

The BLM released the Environmental Assessment in August 2021, and the 30-day comment period ended September 14, 2021. Endangered Species Act consultation with USFWS initiated September 9, 2021. National Historic Preservation Act consultation anticipated before the end of September 2021.

BLM Contacts: John Dalton, PSSC Team Leader - Renewable Energy Support Team, and Brandon G. Anderson, Assistant District Manager, Project Support

## **Sunlight Solar**

BLM Action: Processing request

Partners: Sunlight Solar LLC

Status: A ROW application was filed on September 10, 2021, by Sunlight Solar LLC (a subsidiary of NextEra Energy) for construction of a 230-MW battery energy storage system on approximately 94 acres and wholly within the Desert Sunlight project; additionally, it would tie into the existing Desert Sunlight 230-kVgen-tie line and connect to the Red Bluff substation. Anticipated construction is desired for December 2021.

BLM Contacts: John Dalton, PSSC Team Leader - Renewable Energy Support Team, and Nancy Robledo, Project Lead/Realty Specialist

## *Lands and Realty*

### **Chiriaco Water Facilities Expansion (Chiriaco Summit Water District)**

BLM Action: Chiriaco Summit Water District (CSWD) holds a ROW grant for the Chiriaco Water Facilities within the Chiriaco community. The ROW is on 2.44 acres and expires in 2038. CSWD received a \$2.9 million state grant from the California State Water Resources Control Board to upgrade the facilities. The state grant funding is subject to CSWD constructing the project by September 2022. CSWD has applied for an amendment to the existing ROW grant that would continue the use of public lands and proposes to replace its antiquated 35,000-gallon steel tank with a 500,000-gallon bolted steel tank, rehab the existing 300,000 open reservoir, and relocate and upgrade the microfiltration treatment plant from private property to BLM lands.

Additional upgrades include below-grade and onsite yard piping for connection of facilities and future relocation of a diesel engine-driven fire pump. The ROW amendment would increase the project footprint by an additional 2.5 acres for a total of approximately five acres.

Partners: CSWD

Status: On July 16, 2021, the BLM published the Final EA and unsigned FONSI. The public comment period ended July 31, 2021. The grant was issued September 17, 2021, subject to a reclamation cost estimate, bond, a pre-construction meeting, and the notice to proceed.

BLM Contact: L. Nancy Robledo, Project Lead/Realty Specialist

## *Wildlife*

### **San Gorgonio Pass Wind Resource Area, Avian and Bat Study**

BLM Action: Due to a lack of cohesive monitoring data from wind energy sites, the PSSCFO initiated meetings with wind facility operators to discuss the need for more rigorous avian and bat surveys. As a result, the PSSCFO began working with the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service (USFWS), California Department of Fish and Wildlife (CDFW) and the U.S. Geological Survey (USGS) to develop standardized survey protocols for estimating wildlife abundance and mortality rates. These survey protocols are designed to meet guidance by the USFWS for Bird and Bat Conservation Strategies and Eagle Conservation Plans associated with wind energy development.

The BLM entered its second year of regional surveys in 2018, which will continue into 2022. The USGS is analyzing the data collected through the studies and has canine detection teams in the field for the third year of this research study.

Partners: USFWS, CDFW, Conservation Canines, Rogue Detection Teams and the USGS

Status: Continuing surveys into 2022.

BLM Contact: Kristen Lalumiere, Wildlife Biologist

## *National Monuments*

### **Sand to Snow National Monument Planning**

BLM Action: Develop a land use management plan. The Sand to Snow National Monument (SSNM) is jointly managed by the BLM and US Forest Service (USFS) through a Service-First Agreement. Both agencies are initiating actions to meet the new responsibilities in managing this national monument. The Monument Manager, Jihadda Govan, is an USFS employee based out of the San Bernardino National Forest, Supervisor's Office. Prior to her hire, a joint BLM-USFS interdisciplinary team was assembled in 2016 and developed an early draft Analysis of the Management Situation (AMS). The draft AMS identifies the current and

existing baseline management for the SSNM, specifically as it applies to items mentioned in the monument proclamation. The draft AMS is the first step in the planning process for the SSNM Land Use Plan (Monument Plan). The Monument Plan will provide for the proper care and management of the objects of historical and scientific interest for which the monument was designated, and to conserve and protect the cultural, ecological, and scientific resources found within the monument for the benefit and enjoyment of present and future generations. BLM policy requires a unique set of land use decisions for each national monument.

Partners: San Bernadino National Forest, US Forest Service

Status: Preparation plan submitted to BLM HQ. Statement of work being drafted.

BLM Contact: Jihadda Govan, Sand to Snow National Monument Manager

### **Santa Rosa & San Jacinto Mountains National Monument 20<sup>th</sup> Anniversary**

BLM Action: Education and outreach.

Partners: Friends of the Desert Mountains and the Coachella Valley Mountains Conservancy

Status: On October 24, 2020, the Santa Rosa and San Jacinto Mountains National Monument (SRSJMNM) celebrated its 20th anniversary. Due to the pandemic, nearly all the special events and programs planned for this special milestone were postponed.

However, through the Monument's partnership with Friends of the Desert Mountains, upgrades to the exterior of the Visitor Center were 90% completed through a \$84,000 grant from the Coachella Valley Mountains Conservancy. New and upgraded installations include a shaded, three panel orientation and safety kiosk, new "Welcome" and "Leave No Trace" signs outside the front door of the Visitor Center, and new railing with five interpretive panels about the desert tortoise near the desert tortoise enclosure. All these interpretive improvements were planned as part of the Monument's 20<sup>th</sup> anniversary celebration.

BLM Contact: Danielle Ortiz, Santa Rosa and San Jacinto Mountains National Monument Manager

*Other/Misc.*

### **National Public Lands Day**

BLM Action: Education and outreach.

Partners: Joshua Tree National Park, San Bernardino National Forest, Friends of Big Morongo Canyon, and Friends of the Desert Mountains.

Status: On September 25, the PSSCFO hosted a cleanup and unveiled new OHV waysides for Thermal and Pinkham Canyons in coordination with Joshua Tree National Park. To avoid desert



heat, two events are planned for October 23, “Make a Difference Day” and National Public Lands Day in coordination with the San Bernardino National Forest and Friends of Big Morongo Canyon. The SRSJMNM also plans to host a NPLD event at Pinyon Pines in coordination with the San Bernardino National Forest and Friends of the Desert Mountains this fall.

BLM Contacts: Tracy Albrecht, Interpretive Education Specialist; Daniel Kasang, Outdoor Recreation Planner

## Ridgecrest Field Office (RIFO)



*Photo: BLM employee takes a moment with public lands visitors*

### *Archaeology*

#### **New Archaeologist**

Status: Ridgecrest Field Office is excited that Amy Girado has accepted the Archeologist GS-11 position. Her start date was September 20<sup>th</sup>.

BLM Contact: Carl Symons, Field Manager

### *Grazing*

#### **Range Improvements Project nearing Decision near Deep Springs Valley**

BLM Action: An environmental assessment has been prepared to analyze the effects of constructing seven new water trough sites, two water pipelines, one permanent corral, and one water tank. The purpose of the additions intends to disperse grazing across a larger area, thus making better use of forage and reducing the effects of cattle at existing watering sites.

Partners: Deep Springs Trustees (grazing permit holder) on Deep Spring Valley and South Oasis allotments.

Status: The Proposed Decision was signed on 8/31/2021. We are now in the 30-day protest period.

BLM Contact: Carl Symons, Field Manager

### *Lands and Realty*

#### **California High Speed Rail – Bakersfield to Palmdale segment**

BLM Action: The California High Speed Rail Authority (CAHSRA), has completed the Final Environmental Impact Report / Environmental Impact Statement, which includes four parcels of BLM land ranging from 40 acres to 160 acres each on land between Bakersfield and Palmdale. The CAHSRA submitted a right-of-way application in 2018 as part of completing the high-speed rail line between Los Angeles and San Francisco.

Partners: California High Speed Rail Authority (applicant)

Status: Ridgecrest BLM will continue to process the application by completing a Record of Decision for the alignments on BLM-managed land and may issue a right-of-way over the next year.

BLM Contacts: Paul Rodriguez, Realty Specialist and Carl Symons, Field Manager

### *Minerals and Mining*

#### **Exploration Plan of Operation for Conglomerate Mesa near Olancha**

BLM Action: Mojave Precious Metals submitted a Plan of Operation to reopen roads and re-establish drill pads for 30 locations on Conglomerate Mesa, east of Lone Pine. Four holes would be directionally drilled from each pad for a total of 120 holes. BLM will prepare an Environmental Assessment and Decision Record to determine if the exploration can proceed. The area has been explored for gold over the past 40 years and has been considered for wilderness designation, however, the area was released from wilderness consideration by Congress.

Partners: Mojave Precious Metals (applicant)

Status: The 30-day scoping period for the project is closed. BLM is going through the comments received (approx. 27,000). Based on the information received we will begin creating the NEPA document.

BLM Contacts: Carl Symons, Field Manager and Randy Porter, Geologist

### **Mining Plan of Operation for Makayla 2 Pumice Quarry near Coso Junction**

BLM Action: Southwest Global Pumice submitted a Mining Plan of Operation to expand operations to a new quarry location 1/4 mile from their existing pit, east of U.S. 395 near Coso Junction. The 25-acre site has been previously disturbed on 15 acres and would include 10 acres of new disturbance. Environmental issues include dust, the presence of the Mojave ground squirrel (listed as endangered under the CA Endangered Species Act) and maintaining public access.

Partners: Southwest Global Pumice (applicant / mining claimant)

Status: Ridgecrest BLM signed the decision on July 19, 2021; working on issuing contract.

BLM Contacts: Carl Symons, Field Manager and Randy Porter, Geologist

### *Recreation*

#### **Fuel Tank Installed at Jawbone Station**

BLM Action: A new fuel station has been installed at Jawbone Station. The tank will allow heavy equipment to fuel road and trail maintenance equipment efficiently while protecting the environment. The project received funding from the California OHV Fund's G20 Operations grant.

Partners: Friends of Jawbone

Status: Installed. Awaiting final approvals before putting into operation.

BLM Contacts: Craig Beck, Supervisory Recreation Planner, and Randy Masner, Civil Engineering Technician

#### **Cottonwood Creek Wild and Scenic River scoping begins**

BLM Action: Scoping for the Comprehensive River Management Plan for Cottonwood Creek Wild and Scenic River (WSR) opened on June 22, 2021. The Cottonwood Creek WSR flows through Inyo National Forest (Inyo NF) and Ridgecrest Field Office in Inyo County, east of Big Pine. With the Inyo Inyo NF as the lead agency for the planning, interested members of the public can provide scoping comments and data through the Inyo NF's website. The BLM's ePlanning site directs readers to the Forest Service website for consistency and to reduce redundancy.

Partners: Inyo National Forest

Status: Scoping period closed July 23, 2021; BLM is working with FS to review comments.

BLM Contact: Carl Symons, Field Manager

### *Renewable Energy and Transmission*

#### **Sky River Road Appeal Dropped**

BLM Action: In 2019, the BLM issued a decision record and ROW to construct a new road for access to the NextEra Sky River wind farm on private land, east of Tehachapi. The Pacific Crest Trail Association (PCTA) appealed the decision. During the appeal, the PCTA and NextEra entered into negotiations, attempting to resolve differences. After successful negotiation, the appeal was dropped by PCTA and dismissed by the Interior Board of Land Appeals (IBLA).

Status: Appeal dismissed by IBLA in June 2021. NextEra has resumed construction on the road.

BLM Contacts: Carl Symons, Field Manager and Paul Rodriguez, Realty Specialist

### *Wild Horses and Burros*

#### **Centennial Horse Gather**

BLM Action: BLM is working on a gather for October 2021 to remove up to 250 horses from the Centennial Herd management Area on the Navy Air Weapons Station – China Lake (NAWS-CL). Management level is 168 horses, estimated 750 currently.

Partners: U.S. Navy at NAWS-CL

Status: Contract was awarded to Rocking a Livestock, Inc.

BLM Contacts: Carl Symons, Field Manager and Alex Neibergs, Wild Horse and Burro Specialist

### *Wildlife*

#### **Biologist Position**

BLM Action: Ridgecrest biologist took a position in another BLM office.

Partners: N/A

Status: Ridgecrest is currently working on filling a biologist position.

BLM Contacts: Carl Symons, Field Manager

## California Desert Interagency Fire Program (CDIFP)



Photo: BLM firefighters at work

### *Fire Incidents*

#### **Fires for Calendar Year 2021**

**BLM Action:** There have been approximately 121 fires within the California Desert Interagency Fire Program (CDIFP) so far this year. The total land burned is approximately 11,378 acres; of these 5,727 acres were on BLM lands and 2,995 acres were on National Park Service (NPS) lands; the remainder were either private property or on another agency's lands. The largest fire was the Southern Fire in San Diego County in the El Centro Field Office; it was 5,250 acres of which 3,031 acres were on BLM lands. The largest fire in one of the park units was the 2,490-acre Mojave Fire in the Mojave Preserve. The 1,512-acre Owens Fire in the Ridgecrest Field Office was the largest fire on only BLM lands.

**Partners:** The CDIFP has cooperative fire agreements with several counties and cities as well as other Federal and California State partners. Imperial County Fire, Riverside County Fire, San Bernardino County Fire, Kern County Fire, Redlands Fire Department, Apple Valley Fire Department, Victorville Fire Department, Palm Springs Fire Department, CAL FIRE, the United

States Forest Service, and the Bureau of Indian Affairs, are some of the partner fire departments we work with.

Status: All of the described fires are currently out.

BLM Contacts: Paul Gibbs, District Fire Management Officer and Freddie Espinoza, Assistant Fire Management Officer

### *Fuels Projects*

BLM Action: Fuels treatments using methods such as hand, mechanical, chemical, and prescribed burning have been completed to protect natural and cultural resources. Fuels management also provides fire suppression personnel opportunities to take action to control wildfires and protect infrastructure and private property. Treatments were used to contain, control, or otherwise suppress 19 wildfires in 2020 and six fires to date in 2021. Most wildfire and fuels treatment interactions were along the southern border, but two fires occurred along Highway 62 between Desert Hot Springs and Morongo Valley where tamarisk and non-native grass was removed. Maintenance is ongoing until the tamarisk is fully eradicated.

Partners: Partners in both BLM and National Park Service (NPS) fuels treatments for 2021 include the California Conservation Corps. The NPS is using the Ancestral Lands Conservation Corps to implement treatments to protect Joshua trees. Other BLM partners include the Riverside County Habitat Conservation Agency, the San Bernardino Valley Water Conservation District, California Department of Fish and Wildlife, the California Department of Forestry and Fire Protection (CAL FIRE), The Wildlands Conservancy, the Friends of the Desert Mountains, the Ramona Band of Cahuilla Indians, Morongo Band of Mission Indians, and Customs and Border Protection

Status: The BLM has completed 7,179 acres of fuels treatments: 5,960 acres in the Palm Springs Field Office, 717 acres in the Barstow Field Office, one acre in the Needles Field Office, and 161 acres in the Ridgecrest Field Office. There were 340 acres completed in Joshua Tree National Park.

BLM Contact: James Gannon, District Fuels Program Manager

### *Mitigation and Education Projects*

BLM Action: The BLM completed 28 community assistance activities this year to help communities withstand the effects of wildfires and build resilience into the communities to help in their recovery if a fire were to occur. Mitigation-Education staff worked with cooperators and communities to plan and implement local fuels treatments such as the Sunrise Community Fuel Break in Julian and the North Mountain Fuel Break near Poppet Flats south of Banning. Both treatments have been used repeatedly to protect the two communities from wildfires including the Cedar Fire of 2003 and the Esperanza Fire of 2006 respectively. Maintenance of each was completed to ensure their effectiveness.



Partners: Partners in mitigation and education efforts include the greater San Diego County Fire Safe Council and 26 of the community fire safe councils throughout the county. Other agencies the BLM works with include the U.S. Forest Service, CAL FIRE, and various local government agencies.

Status: The BLM has completed 28 community assistance activities with four education events postponed due to Covid restrictions. An additional two wildland urban interface workshops were held in San Diego County for residents in the Chula Vista and Deer Springs areas.

BLM Contacts: James Gannon, District Fuels Program Manager and Jason Winbigler, South Zone Mitigation-Education Specialist

### *Hiring Updates*

#### **Workforce Transformation**

BLM Action: The CDIFP has been approved to recruit and fill a biological technician position within the BLM fire program to assist with the planning and implementation of fuels treatments. If additional preparedness funds become available, the BLM is planning to achieve an 80/20 split between full-time and part-time fire positions. The current split for CDD is close to 60/40. Additional dollars could also be used to staff the BLM engines seven days a week instead of the current five days per week. The NPS engines are already funded to be staffed seven days a week.

Status: The BLM/NPS are awaiting to see if the infrastructure bill and the budget reconciliation are passed and signed by President Biden. Otherwise, no increases in preparedness funding are expected until FY2023.

BLM Contacts: Paul Gibbs, District Fire Management Officer and Freddie Espinoza, Assistant Fire Management Officer