

Bureau of Land Management Public Meeting
Desert Advisory Public Meeting

Moderated by Greg Miller
Saturday, May 14, 2022
9:00 a.m.

Remote Proceeding
Los Angeles, CA 90017

Reported by: Simone Knudsen

JOB NO.: 5210234

A P P E A R A N C E S

List of Attendees:

Mike Ahrens, Field Manager, BLM Needles

(by videoconference)

Brandon Anderson, Acting Associate District Manager

(by videoconference)

James Bagley, DAC, Public at Large

(by videoconference)

Randy Banis, DAC, Public (by videoconference)

Ryan Chatterson, Field Manager, El Centro

(by videoconference)

Jeff Childers, Acting Field Manager, Barstow

(by videoconference)

Paul Denholm, National Renewable Energy Laboratory

(by videoconference)

Freddie Espinoza, Assistant Fire Management Officer,
California Desert Interagency Fire Program

(by videoconference)

Tim Gilloon, Field Manager, Palm Springs-Southcoast

(by videoconference)

Richard Holliday, Disperse Recreation

(by videoconference)

Matt, Tech Concierge (by videoconference)

Kate Miyamoto, Acting Public Affairs Specialist

(by videoconference)

A P P E A R A N C E S (Cont'd)

Chris Otahal, BAFO Wildlife Biologist

(by videoconference)

Jayne Powell, DAC, Energy and Mineral Development

Interest (by videoconference)

Edward Stovin, DAC, Offroad Vehicle Uses

(by videoconference)

Carl Symons, Field Manager, Ridgecrest

(by videoconference)

Dan Taylor, DAC, Film Industry Interest

(by videoconference)

Jack Thompson, DAC, Conservation Community

(by videoconference)

Paul Whitehead, DAC, Public at Large

(by videoconference)

Carrie Woods, Acting Assistant District Manager,

California Desert District for BLM

(by videoconference)

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P R O C E E D I N G S

THE REPORTER: Good morning, everyone.

I apologize for being a bit tardy this morning. There were some technical difficulties with our link.

I do just want to briefly have everyone just introduce themselves to me and the role that they will be playing today -- or that they've been playing, rather. I have everyone's names down, obviously, from using the panel's sort of list there, so I'm just going to sort of go down the list, and hopefully you have returned from your break, and you will tell me who you are, starting with Mr. Greg Miller.

MR. MILLER: Hi, Simone. Greg Miller. I'm the acting district manager for the California Desert District BLM. And for everybody, Simone is our court reporter for today.

THE REPORTER: Thank you. Ms. Kate Miyamoto.

MS. MIYAMOTO: I'm the acting public affairs specialist.

THE REPORTER: And I actually have that Mr. Banis is Desert Advisory Council member here, but if there's something more specific that you would like me to put there, Mr. Banis, as your role.

MR. BANIS: Representing the public at

large.

THE REPORTER: I have Mr. Otahal as the BAFO wildlife biologist. Is that --

MR. OTAHAL: Good.

THE REPORTER: That's fine. I have --

MR. OTAHAL: Yep, it is.

THE REPORTER: -- Mrs. Sylvia Ringer as the CDD project manager of Lands, Minerals & Recreation.

MR. BANIS: Sylvia was -- Sylvia's role was filled by Carrie.

MS. WOODS: Yeah, hi, Simone. I'm Carrie Woods, and I'm the acting assistant district manager for the California Desert District for BLM.

THE REPORTER: Okay. Once more, the acting -- I'm so sorry.

MS. WOODS: Oh, that's okay. Acting assistant district manager.

THE REPORTER: Thank you. And, then, Brian Anderson.

MR. ANDERSON: Brandon Anderson.

THE REPORTER: I'm sorry.

MR. ANDERSON: I'm the acting associate district manager.

THE REPORTER: And, then, Mr. Jeff

Childers.

MR. CHILDERS: Yeah, I'm the acting field manager for the Barstow field office.

THE REPORTER: Mr. Ryan Chatterton.

MR. CHATTERTON: Oh, field manager, El Centro field office.

THE REPORTER: Of what field office?

MR. CHATTERTON: El Centro.

THE REPORTER: El Centro. Thank you.
Mr. Mike Ahrens -- or "Auhrens."

MR. AHRENS: Ahrens is correct, yes.
Field manager, BLM, Needles field office.

THE REPORTER: Mr. Tim Gilloon.

MR. GILLOON: Yes, Tim Gilloon, the field manager for the Palm Springs-Southcoast field office.

THE REPORTER: Mr. Carl Symons.

MR. SYMONS: Yeah, Carl Symons. I'm the field manager for the Ridgecrest field office.

THE REPORTER: Mr. Espinoza.

MR. ESPINOZA: Good morning, I'm Freddie Espinoza. I'm the assistant fire management officer for the California Desert Interagency Fire Program.

THE REPORTER: And, lastly, Miss Jayne

Powell.

MS. POWELL: I'm a DAC member representing the energy and mineral development interest.

THE REPORTER: A what member? I'm sorry. You cut out.

MS. POWELL: Desert Advisory Council member representing energy and mineral development interest.

THE REPORTER: And, then, I think I have a couple more, actually. Mr. Dan Taylor.

MR. TAYLOR: I'm a Desert Advisory Council member, and I represent the film industry interest.

THE REPORTER: Mr. Bagley.

MR. BAGLEY: I'm a Desert Council Advisory member, and I represent the public at large.

THE REPORTER: All right. I think the last one is Mr. Edward Stovin.

MR. STOVIN: Stovin, S-T-O-V-I-N.

THE REPORTER: Oh, I couldn't ...

MR. STOVIN: I'm a DAC member. I represent offroad vehicle uses.

THE REPORTER: Offroad vehicle uses. Thank you. Okay. Oh, Mr. Jack Thompson.

MR. THOMPSON: Yeah, I'm a DAC member.
I'm representing the conservation community.

THE REPORTER: Is there anyone I've
missed?

MR. HOLLIDAY: There's me, Dick
Holliday, Richard Holliday.

THE REPORTER: Yes.

MR. HOLLIDAY: Disperse recreation.

THE REPORTER: Disperse recreation.

MR. WHITEHEAD: And I think maybe Paul
Whitehead. Did you mention Paul Whitehead?

THE REPORTER: I have not.

MR. WHITEHEAD: All right. It's DAC
member and public at large.

THE REPORTER: Okay. I apologize.
There's quite a few. And people who are listed under
attendees, are those people also present here,
although I don't ...

MR. BANIS: The people listed under
attendees are members of the public --

THE REPORTER: Okay.

MR. BANIS: -- who are phoning in or
joining through Zoom. But they will be able to raise
their hands and participate during the public comments
session that's on the agenda this afternoon.

THE REPORTER: Okay. I would ask that you -- if you identify yourself for the record, lest you believe it be unclear. Other than that, let's not waste any more time.

MR. BANIS: Well, thank you. Yeah, welcome, Simone, to the Desert Advisory Council. This is your first meeting taking our transcript, isn't it.

THE REPORTER: This is correct, yes.

MR. BANIS: And these are the live results I'm seeing at the bottom of the screen. That's why it's -- it's done very well. I can tell there is a human being behind it. I don't think any computer could be transcribing us as accurately as you have been.

THE REPORTER: Thank you.

MR. BANIS: Thank you.

Okay. With that, ladies and gentlemen, I would like to call the session back into order. And the first item of business is the subgroups for our Desert Advisory Council. Let me try to do this as quickly as possible, but there's going to be some background as to how I will be doing these nominations.

So, first, we did not receive enough applications to stand two of our subgroups. In fact,

we didn't receive enough applications to stand up even half of the membership of two of our subgroups. The third subgroup was different. There was good interest, and it has been stood up I think very well, and I will be showing you and proposing these nominations in just a moment.

Another item surrounding my thoughts is we need to have a Desert Advisory Council member that's going to serve on each of the subgroups in order to provide its nexus per the Federal Advisory Council Act. So each of these subgroups has a member from the DAC that is going to remain within their term in order, or at least get these subgroups going and start on the work that they have to do.

Earlier on I mentioned other Desert Advisory Council members who will be -- whose terms will be expiring next month, and they have expressed interest in reapplying for the DAC and/or being involved in the subgroups. I'm taking that into consideration when nominating people to our subgroups. I really would like our Desert Advisory Council members who are going to be in between memberships, so to speak, I would like to have them serve on our subgroups. They are very highly qualified to do so.

And before I show the subgroup

nomination, I just want to reexplain that the subgroups exist to advise the Desert Advisory Council, not to advise the BLM. That's why we have a Desert Advisory Council member on each subgroup, and that Desert Advisory Council member doesn't affect the course of the discussion. It just keeps it within the guardrails so that the committee can -- or the subgroup can provide excellent advice and usable advice by the DAC.

So I can think of, you know, at some times no better people to give the DAC advice than former DAC members, so I'm leaning on them for help. The only subgroup that we have enough nominations for was the Mojave Trails National Monument subgroup. I'm welcome to have that put up on the screen and show you the nominations. I don't know if there is a way to zoom in on that little bit. Great. It's only two columns. It is not very long.

First of all, under recreation management, commercial, Ashley Lee [ph] is a permit -- receives permits for events for off-road vehicles and recreational activities. She has worked closely with the BLM on events that go across different field offices, and she is very well-versed in the commercial side of recreation, and that will

be, I expect, a topic in the planning process.

For resource management, Linda Castro [ph], was well-supported by letters from some of our -- some of the stronger environmental organizations that work in the desert. I have known Linda for a long time and look forward to working with her, should she be appointed.

Environmental education, Monica Argandona [ph] is a former Desert Advisory Council member, and I have worked very closely with her over the years as well. In fact, Monica was one of the earliest and strongest voices, or if not voices, actually -- not just voices, but some of the best ears in that she helped bring a lot of the coalition together that resulted in the eventual designation of the monument.

Marco Leal [ph] is a -- nominating him for that recreation management for backcountry exploration, because I don't know Marco, but he is a local resident, and his application was compelling in terms of his on-the-ground knowledge of the national monument. I think that is going to be important, to have someone who knows the nooks and crannies of that very large area, and I believe Marco will do that.

For local government, Stephen

Reyes [ph] is also a backcountry explorer but is a former police officer and is involved very closely with his supervisor's office and has served on a number of committees and commissions on behalf of that supervisorial district.

For gem and mineral collecting, Gregor Lawson [ph] has been a longtime participant in the management of these lands that are now made up of the Mojave Trails National Monument, particularly from the side of geology and gem and mineral collection. He has compiled probably one of the best resources with respect to mining history and gem and mineral locating sites in the area.

I'm going to call upon two DAC members -- three DAC members, actually, to help in the last three seats. Jim Bagley knows the in and outs of the lands around the monument as well as anyone, but, also, he knows the history, and he knows the people who are involved in preserving and protecting the history. And I hope -- I'm glad Jim has agreed to help in that capacity.

Ed Stovin, who is also leaving the DAC in between applications, I have asked his help in representing the off-highway vehicle users. He, of course, serves that role now on behalf of the DAC. We

are happy to have his advice now, and I'm sure we will be happy to have his advice on this subgroup.

And, lastly, Dan Taylor, I looked to helping with the developed outdoor recreation activities. There will be visitors -- needs to serve visitors. There will be proposals for places to provide interpretive opportunities, and I don't want to say that there is or isn't going to be someday a visitor center somewhere for this, because we have a lot of discussions about how to manage the developed outdoor recreation opportunities, campsites, for example, or other camping areas. So I hope Dan will be able to help us there.

And with that, I'm going to be selfish and appoint myself as the DAC representative. I will be helping the group stay within the confines of advising the Desert Advisory Council. And, also, just in case I can't attend meetings, I have appointed two alternates, Robert Robinson. Rob Robinson is on the DAC representing the cultural and tribal interests, and Dick Holliday is an alternate, and, as you know, is also on the DAC.

So we weren't able to -- we didn't receive applications or interest for a couple of other positions that were on our list as potential

positions, but these are nine of the interests that we identified in our documents and filled with nine people. I did receive additional applications. They were good applications, and I appreciate everybody who did apply for it, but this is my recommendation going forward for this subgroup. It is an important subgroup.

I'm going to open the floor now. To keep things -- if you could keep it up on the screen, though, open the floor to DAC members. Let me see if I can bring up the list. Looking for hands or a motion to approve or a motion to amend.

MR. TAYLOR: I'll go ahead and motion to approve.

MR. BANIS: It's on the floor. Do I have a second?

MR. BAGLEY: Greg, I'll -- appropriate. I'm on the nomination, but I'm happy to second. Jim Bagley, sorry.

MR. BANIS: It's appropriate. Thanks, Jim.

First speaker is Jayne.

MS. POWELL: I just wanted to know if in terms of serving, all the people that applied fully understood what their responsibilities and time

commitment would be.

MR. BANIS: I think the documents that were available on the website that accompanied the application were well done. They're part of our template that explains the role, that explains the interests that we are interested in hearing from as well as an agreement with respect to their conduct toward each other and their role with the DAC. And, if I may say, on this group in particular, half -- nearly half of the group is a DAC member or was a DAC member at some time.

MS. POWELL: So have they served in this subgroup in the past, any of these people?

MR. BANIS: No. This is a brand-new subgroup.

MS. POWELL: Okay.

MR. BANIS: And I've got to say, too, with this subgroup, from the ear on the ground perspective that I have, this is by far the issue that the general public who follows the BLM is probably the most interested in at this point. It is a planning process that has not been undertaken as quickly as most people had expected or wanted. And there's a lot of pent-up desire to participate.

I attended one of the three briefing

sessions that were conducted by the consultants and by monument manager, Noelle. And I mean I thought it was really done -- really well done, really well done with respect to explaining how the sequencing is going to go on this. It's really complicated, and I feel bad about eating into Greg's time on this, but the DRECP plays a huge, huge role in how the monument will be planned.

The plans for the monument essentially having made through the course of DRECP, and WEMO Route designated -- many aspects of it have already sort of been made, in a sense. It's just pulling them out of the guiding documents for the ACECs. I'm going to do some alphabet soup, sorry. The ACECs, the NLCS, the Special Recreation Management Areas, the SRMAs.

All of those things, the rules are already sort of written. They have just never had to be evaluated all together and have a management plan that actually meets the terms set forward of the things that need to be looked at and protected by the proclamation that was done by the president. So it is really complicated.

MS. POWELL: Thank you. And my last question related to the assignments, do any of these people have any underlying conflicts of interest with

serving?

MR. BANIS: I don't -- the question does not specifically ask that, but I do expect that, just as we have been reached out to by general counsel with respect to our -- describing any potential conflicts of interest that we have, I think that they will probably be asked to do the same.

And, remember, to some extent, you know, we are not -- we are not prohibited from having a conflict of interest in a strict sense. Just it has to be disclosed. People have to know if it, and you can't participate in stuff that affects it.

So, you know, for example, if you hold a -- if you represent a portion of -- a piece of an industry that specifically is proposing something, if that comes up with the DAC, you just can't discuss it. And you can even maybe say, "Hey, guess what? I have a contract with this," or, "I have an interest in this, so I'm not going to discuss it." Or, "My interest in it is so tangential. This is my interest, and now it is disclosed. I'm just going to tell you how I feel."

So as long as interests are disclosed, that is what we are asked to do by the Council, and I expect that these participants would as well.

MS. POWELL: Thank you.

MR. BANIS: If anyone on the BLM knows different, hears different, or feels differently, I would be happy to hear that.

For time commitment, the subgroups are going to meet approximately three to four times a year, and their participation, I'm guessing, on this one will be scheduled mostly around the time periods that call for specific input at the important benchmarks of the planning process.

In other words, the subgroups aren't just going to sit down and talk about, you know, one little this and one little that and one little -- it's really going to be about, okay, first things coming out is scoping. What can the subgroup help to provide us advice on in the event the Desert Advisory Council wants to put in its advice with respect to scoping.

And then there may be some drafts. The subgroup will have an opportunity to help with the -- will look at the drafts and help us prepare any recommendations that we might have.

Floor is open still. With that, rather than going through hands or all in favors, let me call for objections to the motion, the motion to appoint this subgroup. Are there any objections from the

Council?

MS. POWELL: No.

MR. BANIS: Hearing, seeing none, thank you. We have stood up our first subgroup in a very, very long time. Thank you, everybody.

The two subgroups that didn't receive enough applications, Dumont Dunes subgroup and the Imperial Sand Dunes subgroup. We have -- we received some dynamite applications, and I have filled some of those seats. But I'm going to ask the BLM if we can keep the application period open until the next DAC meeting, and hopefully we can fill those seats, and we will consider those at that time. Is there any objection to that?

Jayne, why don't you take the floor? You're first, and then Dick.

MS. POWELL: So I don't have an objection. I just wondered for the Imperial Dunes subgroup how many more applicants we needed or how many more seats do we need to fill to be able to stand that subgroup up. Do you know?

MR. BANIS: Six out of nine.

MS. POWELL: Oh, that's a lot. Okay.

MR. BANIS: And I have you assisting us on the DAC representation side of it.

MS. POWELL: Well, I have e-mailed some people asking them if they knew of anybody to please, you know, get them to apply.

MR. BANIS: Yes --

MS. POWELL: So I will reach out again.

MR. BANIS: Yes, please, please. And the other subgroup is the Dumont Dunes subgroup, and five out of nine are open. So I would like to have those kept open, and we will consider them at the next meeting.

Dick.

MR. HOLLIDAY: Yeah, I think that, actually, probably even after the first meeting, as far as one of the dune users, the summertime is not a time when they would even maybe know that it was happening. And I think that once we get into the season where they -- I mean I have people when I'm camping there are always ask me when there's going to be an opening, and, yet, they are probably not even aware of that there is an opening.

And so I would think that, yeah, we should have it open and let -- and I can generate some more -- I can probably generate some more people that wanted it when we get into dune season.

MR. BANIS: Yeah. I'm looking forward

to receiving more applications. The seats that are listed on the website are still valid. By and large on both of those dune subgroups, natural resources management had good interest. Industry had good interest. But, actually, user, direct user participation was very low.

UNIDENTIFIED SPEAKER: Randy, I think it's a good idea to keep them open. I encourage you to do that. The COVID put a dent in a lot of things. Hopefully we will get people back interested. Just need to get information out there it's available.

MR. BANIS: Good. I just -- sorry again, Greg. I promise we will have time for everything. But, everybody, please do make an effort to find, and BLM help us DAC members find the recording of the Mojave Trails National Monument information session. They did three of them, and they're going to be recorded and available. If you have any interest at all, you really have to see it, because there's a very specific path that this is going to take, because so many guardrails and sideboards have been written during this time that are going to come into play. And it really needs a roadmap, and that's the roadmap.

So with that, Dick, you're the next

speaker, and then if I can, I would like to move on to Greg's presentation that I cut into.

UNIDENTIFIED SPEAKER: Are you going to put up people's names that you did get for these groups, for the subgroups at the dunes?

MR. BANIS: I'll share them with the Desert Advisory Council members.

UNIDENTIFIED SPEAKER: Okay. You did or will?

MR. BANIS: No, I will.

UNIDENTIFIED SPEAKER: Okay. All right. Yeah -- I don't want to be -- I don't want to be bugging somebody that's already done it.

MR. BANIS: I'll share it with Desert Advisory Council members, but until I make the -- until the chairman makes the nominations, let's keep that internal, please.

UNIDENTIFIED SPEAKER: Okay. That's fine. No problem.

MR. BANIS: And, of course, all the applications and all the accompanying documents are in the possession of the BLM, because I received everything from them. And the public can, you know, have opportunities for inspection through the BLM.

Thank you. With that, we can clear the

screen, and I'm going to turn the floor over to Greg to help us with the DRECP presentation. And, again, I'm sorry. This is a lot of housekeeping.

MR. MILLER: No, no worries. Randy, thanks. You know, I understand. I think the subgroups are a bit more important than the -- because we can revisit the DRECP at any time, and we will.

So Brandon Anderson is going to be doing the presentation, but I just wanted to start out by saying that this is a -- and we can definitely get deeper into the discussion of the Desert Renewable Energy Conservation Plan, and that can happen at a later date. Amy Fresnock-Parker, who is our DRECP implementation coordinator for the desert district is on detail as a Cosumnes Reserve manager in central California, so she couldn't be here. But once she's back, we could really dive deep into some of these topics that you're going to see Brandon discuss and go over.

So we will try to make it -- Brandon is going to make an attempt to get it done, not blazingly fast, but definitely enough so we have time to start lunch at noon. So, Brandon, take it over. Thank you.

MR. ANDERSON: Yeah, perfect. And, like Greg said, this is a high-level overview, and I'm

going to go a little off script just so maybe we can make up some time, and then we have time at the end.

So for those who are not aware of the DRECP, or the Desert Renewable Energy Conservation Plan, it is the guiding document that BLM uses in the California Desert District for plan uses and use of public lands.

It kind of started back in 2005 or so, we had had an influx of renewable energy applications, and the existing land use plan didn't do I guess a good enough job of kind of streamlining where renewable energy should go. That is kind of where the idea of the DRECP came from. It had two primary goals. One is to identify areas that we would want to protect for other uses, so the land use management of those resources, as well as providing a layer of streamlining renewable energy on public lands.

So the DRECP, as current administration and previous administration have had a focus on getting energy independence as well as addressing some of our climate change issues, and so that's where this DRECP came in, is we want to manage the multiple uses of public lands, and that's where the DRECP comes in in helping to organize where renewable energy could go and conserve land that's needed for various uses.

So as you can kind of see, this is the map, a very large area, diverse landscapes. It involves two other field offices that are outside of the desert district including the Bishop and Bakersfield field office.

So kind of what the -- what did the DRECP do, that amendment? Back in 1980, the BLM put together the original California Desert Conservation Area Plan, and that has been subsequently amended throughout the years to address changes in resources, uses, et cetera. And so the most recent amendment is the DRECP, and it amends three different plans. One is the California Desert Conservation Area Plan, but then it also had -- includes portions of the Bishop Resource Management Plan as well as the Bakersfield.

And, again, just talking about it, it integrates renewable energy and how we want to permit those onto public lands. And these amendments only discuss public lands. It doesn't change any or apply to public -- or, sorry, private lands or other agencies.

So what the DRECP did not do, it didn't change anything regarding grazings, mineral development, OHV recreational area, wild horse and burros. That is kind of outside the scope of what the

DRECP really looked at.

And getting into the primary in terms of renewable energy designations, there's three designations that the plan allows for renewable energy development, the first being the development focus area, or DFA. These are areas that the BLM identified that were, one, appropriate, and, two, had the resources to develop a renewable energy.

Within the plan, there are incentives in streamlining things that BLM can do such as tiering to the environmental documents that helps reduce the amount of time it takes to permit those projects, as well as there's some incentives that the plan identifies. And there's table 13 in the land use plan that summarizes all of the incentives that go along with proposing a project within a DFA.

The other two areas that renewable energy is allowed and is variance process lands. There is no incentives, and there's some streamlining that we can do in terms of tiering to existing analyses. And then general public lands, those are -- there is no incentives and no streamlining available, but they are lands that projects could be proposed on.

And so there's a couple of other

allocations. I won't spend too much time on these, but there's these other allocations that the DRECP did identify, one being the National Conservation Lands. That came out of the 1994 omnibus bill, the 1-11-11. And then it also made some permitting and land use criteria for the ACEC areas of critical environmental concerns, wildlife allocations, and recreation management areas. These are like your special recreation management areas, these SRMAs, or the extensive recreation. So these are also designations in the DRECP.

So it's kind of a breakdown of acreages on what was identified for renewable energy, these three here, that if you calculate -- or if you add them all up, that's approximately 850,000 acres for renewable. And then these are the acre breakdowns for the areas concerned. This includes the National Conservation Lands as well as the recreational management areas.

So the next couple of slides, I just wanted to walk through kind of what the landscape kind of looks like. So this is the general -- without any of the additional allocations, the green are the legislatively or legally protected. This includes our national parks, wilderness areas that are protected

and off limits for development for renewable energy.

This first slide here, this is our National Conservation Lands. These are those -- the omnibus bills that I referred to that had national significance. So it has some of the overlap within the green, but it added additional protections in conservation areas, so these plans would be managed for conservation purposes.

This next one is the recreation. So these are your RMAs and SRMAs. So it added additional areas as well as some overlap within the National Conservation Lands.

And then, finally, this is the development focus areas and various process lands, and here in pink.

And then the next couple slides, I will highlight the development focus. So, as you can see, there is a lot of acres are dedicated for resource and recreation, and then there's that approximately 850,000 acres dedicated for or could be used for renewable energy. So this is just the development focus areas and the various process lands.

And then the next slide, these are the general public lands where -- that could be used for renewable energy.

And then I put together a quick slide based on a question that I think Randy had regarding the Ocotillo Wells, and we can go back to the slide if there's further questions identifying where the DFA for geothermal is. The red is no surface occupancy, and this black here is geothermal with surface occupancy. So there's about 1200 or so acres of land that could be occupied.

And then the last bit that I wanted to go into kind of high level of what these conservation management actions are, or CMAs. The land use plan, it put together quite a few best management practices and restriction prohibitions on different activities, and it helps guide development in those areas and what can and cannot happen. And so it is broken down kind of by type.

You have the LUPA Wide. These are actions or best management practices that cover any activities across the entire planning boundary. And then it is broken into different areas. So we talked about the National Conservation Lands. There's specific CMAs that deal with if you have some type of proposal or use on those lands as well as a recreation. And then there's specific CMAs dealing with DFAs and various process links.

And so I wanted to walk through a recent project that we permitted under the DRECP. This is the Arica and Victory Pass Solar Project. And just for context, we are north of I-10 near the desert center area, this Highway 177 here. This is the original project application that came to the BLM.

And then with further refinements from looking at resource issues such as cultural as well as implementation of certain CMAs, you can see that some of the boundaries of the original application, if you look over here to what this has proposed over here, there were some areas that were taken out. These areas here, for sensitive plants. There's a CMA that talks about a buffer around known locations, and so they flip areas out of their project to avoid those known locations.

And, then, the Victory Pass Project, they kind of split the original application in two separate projects based on what they had prior purchase agreements for. You can see that there was additional areas that they cut out of their project, primarily for microfil woodland avoidance in this area here as well as this -- as well as some cultural resources that are in and around the area that they avoided.

I think that is the main thing I wanted to cover. I'm trying to keep us on time. I mean, like Greg said, one of the things that we would like to do for future presentations is get input from you on what you're interested in, so maybe we can tailor, now that you kind of have a foundation of what the DRECP is and some of its components to answer some of your more specific questions.

And with that, I will open up the -- or I will turn it back over to Randy.

MR. BANIS: Okay. Thank you, gang. Gee, thanks for that. It really is just a 30,000-foot view. And to see it in the whole is a lot different than going into the appendices and looking at the individual ACECs and NLCS areas and looking at all of the detail of it. There's a lot to it.

I'm going to get the participant list up and see whose hands -- here we go. Whose hands are up? Anybody have questions or comments for us? I am going to start with Ed, Ed Stovin.

MR. STOVIN: Thanks, Randy. Yeah, that was interesting.

MR. BANIS: I'm sorry. Just one second, Ed.

Let's go ahead and release the screen,

so we can see each other. Okay. There we go. Great.
Thank you.

Go ahead, Ed.

MR. STOVIN: Thanks. Yeah, that was interesting.

Two things. One, I'm interested in the Ocotillo Wells area. That's the area that I recreate in. And I saw you had -- there was two black little squares that would represent areas available for surface occupancy, and then a whole bunch of I believe it was red squares where there could be subsurface.

Would that -- and the red squares were sort of a checkerboard, and it looked like there was maybe private property in between. Would it be available to have geothermal on the private and then slant drill into the red?

MR. BANIS: Yeah, that could be -- Greg.

MR. STOVIN: Yeah, go ahead.

MR. MILLER: Yeah. So I believe, and Ryan can help me out, those checkerboard, ownership of State land, I believe, in that area. And, yes, it's possible that the State can allow some surface occupancy on their land and then slant drill into under BLM land, which is non-surface occupancy. And

that's why if we were to designate that as not available, like I mentioned before, that we would not have that opportunity to collect the royalties associated with any kind of resource extraction underneath BLM lands. Does that make sense?

MR. STOVIN: I think so. Would it be possible for me to get a better map of that area, so I could see which area is available for what?

MR. MILLER: Yeah, I don't see why not, Ed. I think we can probably find something available for you.

MR. STOVIN: Okay. And also -- you talked about three different types of areas that could get renewable energy, developmental focus areas, and I believe the other was general public lands, and then another type. What are the definitions of those lands? Like, how you know one from another?

MR. ANDERSON: So in the DRECP, we categorize the lands. So each parcel would have a designation. So if it is under a DFA, we have identified that it has -- it is part of that DFA. And the other two would be variance process lands, and then general public. And so those are all identified within the DRECP and the land use plan on what parcels are associated with what.

MR. STOVIN: . So I would have to just get into the DRECP to see that. Okay. All right. Thank you.

MR. BANIS: Ed, I believe those State lands are State vehicle recreation area lands. I think those are Ocotillo Wells SVRA. So it would be within the management plan and within that parameter with respect to what would happen on those lands. And, you know, those are generally pretty well restricted for vehicle recreation.

And the other thing, before DRECP -- Let's just put it this way. DRECP added a lot of color to the BLM desert district map. There used to be a lot of space on the map that just didn't have a color. And now just about everything has at least one color, if not multiple colors.

And so when it comes to evaluating some potential or projected use on one square of land, it could have more than one set of conservation management actions that need to be consulted that overlap and could even conflict and that would need to be reconciled. And there's a process for doing that in the DRECP as well.

MR. STOVIN: Wow. Okay.

MR. BANIS: Let's see. Jayne?

MS. POWELL: I was curious why the development focus area was the smallest in terms of the number of acres included the DRECP.

MR. MILLER: I think it was just a matter of how that process worked. When we started with the California Department of Fish and Wildlife working with -- starting with their process of accounting to the desert conservation area plan. And so then, and that's when the Energy Commission, the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, and the BLM joined to develop a larger plan that tried to encompass all lands in Southern California, meaning State lands, Fish and Wildlife Service lands, BLM lands, and, you know, County across the -- it ended up that we -- and I'm giving a long answer to a long question -- or a short question, really. But it ended up that the other entities, Fish and Wildlife Service, California Energy Commission, they weren't ready to publish, so the BLM went ahead and published.

And if you were to look at some of the proposals that started in the original documentation, many of those lands that are development focus areas connected into County lands that would be open for -- or State lands that would be open for development as well. So it kind of cut it short a little bit.

But then the other idea was that much of the land in the BLM -- in the Southern California desert area is wilderness. I mean we have -- again, we have the largest wilderness program in the Bureau in the desert district by acres and number of wilderness areas. And so trying to fit some of those development focus areas that would be allowable to use for renewable energy in those what's kind of a puzzle piece that didn't have all of the parts -- or all of the knobs sticking out, so we really couldn't stick them in areas that were -- really couldn't put some of those development focus areas in areas that were really sensitive, especially with wilderness and -- or wilderness study areas or wild and scenic rivers or something like that.

So it ended up that even though the desert district has probably the largest number of acres available for renewable energy on all BLM states -- Nevada is catching up real quick -- it wasn't entirely -- it was less than what -- short answer, Jayne, don't know. But that's what it ended up being.

MS. POWELL: So is it possible as more knowledge becomes available to revisit that?

MR. MILLER: And if you were --

MS. POWELL: -- that process --

MR. MILLER: Yeah, if you --

MS. POWELL: -- to do that?

MR. MILLER: So if you recall six years ago, we started amendment process to look at this again. And by the end of 2020, it was shut down, just with the -- you know, every time there's a change in administration, it changes our direction; right? That's what happens. So once the new administration came in, the plan amendment for the DRECP was -- and we were looking at changing some things that would maybe assist and let me just say draft EIS went out, so this is not -- this is public information -- that the work that we were doing would help to assist in either streamlining it, the renewable energy locations and processing better or even quicker or even, you know, just a better process of streamlining, and then also identifying some overlap in some of these destinations that might be cleared up a little bit so that it doesn't get too confusing when we are trying to put more in.

And we didn't look at expanding any DFAs, but that's -- I mean in the future, there's always a way to look at, again, amending the California Desert Conservation Area Plan for -- I

think it's been amended 163 times, so it wouldn't be -- it wouldn't be something we couldn't do again if we needed to. But right now for BLM, it's not moving forward with any kind of amendment to the DRECP at this point in time.

I don't know if that helps answer your question.

MS. POWELL: Well, it --

MR. MILLER: It's --

MS. POWELL: -- it does. It just -- and this is just my opinion. It feels like -- we are supposed to be green and we are supposed to be going green to reduce carbon emissions and climate change and all that. But on the other hand, our hands are bound with things like, you know, the focus area being the smallest and the draft EIS being shut down, and the BLM being told, "Don't work on this anymore," by the new administration. So, you know, you can't have -- you can't have your cake and eat it, too, if you are not going to work on it.

So I think that somebody needs to rattle the cages a little bit about this, because, you know, we just talked this morning about 22 parcels, the 2022 sales going out, and then we've got this huge time window between deciding what parcels are actually

going to be available and the environmental documents and the exploration and then the development. And we need renewable energy right now, not in 10 years or 15. Yeah, we will need it then, but we need it now.

So I mean I have said my piece.

MR. BANIS: Floor is open. No? Okay.

We are back to being right on time.

And, again, sorry that came out of your piece of the pie. And that is sort of how I describe amending the DRECP going forward. You guys said have a cake and eat it, too. I really see a pie. And it's very hard once those slices have been sliced to move those slices around, because -- it's just very hard.

Very good. Thanks, everybody. Let's go ahead and take that noon break for lunch if there's no objections? Okay.

And let me take a peek. What is our due date, our due back time? That would be 12:30.

MR. MILLER: 12:30, yep.

MR. BANIS: Hey, that is great. All right. Let's take lunch. Wonderful. We will be back at 12:30, if we could put up the timer. Thanks, everybody. Greg, thank you.

(Off the record.)

MR. BANIS: First item of business is

to review the district and field office and fire overview reports. I'm going to turn the floor over to Greg, Greg Miller, the acting desert district manager, to present the reports. It's your team.

MR. MILLER: All right. Thank you, Randy. Appreciate that. Again, welcome back, everybody, to the afternoon session for the advisory council.

I want to start out with our state director's report. And just so you know, this is done every DAC meeting. We kind of update everybody on leadership and what is going on around the desert district. So just to recap, leadership in Washington, is Tracy Stone-Manning is our BLM director, Nada Wolff Culver is the BLM Deputy Director of Policy and Programs, and Mike Nedd is our Deputy Director for Operations.

Our leadership in California is Karen Mouritsen. She is our state director, and Joe Stout is our associate state director.

Here in the desert district, I am acting district manager. Brandon Anderson is acting associate district manager. My day job is the associate district manager, so once we get a new district manager in place, I will move back to that.

Jeff Childers is our acting Barstow field manager. Mike Ahrens is our Needles field manager. Tim Gilloon is our Palm Springs field manager. Ryan Chatterton is our El Centro field manager. And Carl Symons is our Ridgecrest field manager.

We have two -- three monument managers. One is Dani Ortiz, San Jacinto/Santa -- or, excuse me, Santa Rosa/San Jacinto National Monuments -- Mountains National Monument. Jihadda Govan is a forest service employee who is our national monument manager for the Sand to Snow National Monument. And Noelle Glines-Bovio is our Mojave Trails National Monument manager.

For budget, a recap on the budget, as of April 15th, BLM's operating budget for fiscal year '22 was \$236 million, both new and carryover funding. That includes \$103 million in MLR. That is MLR funding, \$34 million in fire funding, and \$99 million in fee reimbursable contributed and land acquisition accounts.

And FY21, the BLM had a total operating budget of \$250 million, and it is anticipated that FY22 operating budget will be equivalent if not exceed the F 21 budget.

Our 117th Congress, we have Senators

Dianne Feinstein and Alex Padilla, and representatives with significant public lands in the districts are Jay Obernolte with our California -- the 8th district, and Kevin McCarthy, the 23rd district, Raul Ruiz, 36th district, Kevin -- excuse me, Ken Calvert, with the 41st, Darrell Issa with the 50th, and Juan Vargas with the 51st.

So some of the statewide priorities that have been going on for the desert district is OHV recreation, excuse me. Public lands. California offers a variety of recreational opportunities, hunting, fishing, hiking, OHV use, mountain biking, horseback riding. The BLM in California has 25,192 miles of off-highway vehicle routes on public lands, 735,000 acres open for OHV use, including the world-renowned Imperial Sand Dunes Recreation Area.

Also, approximately 6.3 million visitors participate in OHV recreation annually, and the BLM has experienced high visitation in the open OHV areas over the last couple of years.

The BLM has requested a total of \$8.1 million in California State Parks Off-Highway Motor Vehicle and Recreation Grants and Cooperative Agreements, and those grants are being finalized, and we soon will know how much funding we get through them

pretty soon, if we haven't already.

The grant allocations were submitted in 12 of the 14 BLM California field offices with the majority, 64 percent of those, requested by the California Desert District, all five field offices.

Of course, the renewable energy development is a large priority for the district. We manage a robust Renewable Energy Program primarily focused in the desert district, and we have authorized 66 solar, wind, and geothermal projects throughout the State, which generates about 9,000 megawatts of electricity and about \$40 million annually in revenue.

The Renewable Energy Program on BLM lands is crucial to achieve the State's goal of 100 percent clean energy for the State's electrical needs by the year 2045 as well as the Biden Administration's goal of 25 gigawatts of onshore solar wind and geothermal on public land by 2025. So the renewable energy is a huge part of our goals for those, so that's why we have been moving with those a lot.

We do have a project support team -- a project management support team that Brandon and now Carrie Woods is temporally supervising that has been established at the desert district office, along with

a renewable energy support team in Palm Springs field office.

There's some other programs I think that we will have more discussions on, excuse me, as we move through these field office -- field manager's discussions. So what I would like to do real quickly, and I will let the field managers touch on a little bit more deeply on this, is talk about our national monuments.

The Bureau of Land Management manages approximately ten million acres of National Conservation Lands in California. The program in Southern California is incredibly diverse and stretches from the rugged mountains of the Joshua trees to the Mojave Desert to the Pacific Coast. The Mojave Trails and Sand to Snow National Monuments were designated by presidential proclamation in 2016. The Mojave Trails is 1.6 million acres, and it consumes 50,000 acres of wilderness. The Sand to Snow National Monument includes 83,000 acres of BLM land and one wilderness area.

On March 11th, the Santa Rosa and San Jacinto Mountains National Monument Visitor Center reopened for public after being closed for nearly two years because of COVID. The center gained new outdoor

exhibits with information on safety and responsible recreation, leave no trace principles, and desert tortoise conservation.

Since reopening, the visitor center staff and Friends of the Desert Mountain volunteers welcomed more than 1,000 visitors, and probably more since this report.

Okay. And with that, I'm going to call on our field managers to report anything out that they would like to -- oh, and I do want to say, though, is, we have -- and I think Randy mentioned it earlier, is that we have four DAC positions that are expiring in June of 2022. Ed Stovin, Dan Taylor, Jim Bagley, and Paul Whitehead are all -- all terms are up, and so we are getting ready. I think the call for nominations is being sent out. I think the Federal Register is getting ready to publish that. If it didn't already, it will on Monday, is my thought. And if you want to reapply or anything like that of any importance, please do. Call Kate -- get ahold of Kate and/or Michelle Van Der Linden.

I do want to say one more thing. The BLM just recently went through what is called a workforce planning review. So we have -- throughout the State of California, each field office and

district office looked at their tables of organizations and did an adjustment as to either adding or moving or renaming or reclassifying some positions across all of the table of organizations.

And with some hopefully additional budget coming down the pike, we should be able to start adding more positions to those crucial areas that are in need, specifically geologists. We are going to get hopefully more of those individuals on board as well as administrative support assistance, some technical technician work folks, archaeologist, art technicians, biological technicians, and a few more supervisors to help spread the wealth, so to speak, and to have that span of control for those supervisors that currently have many, many reports that they have to look out here on a regular basis.

So with that, we are going to go ahead and start moving through the field managers, starting with Barstow and Mr. Childers.

MR. CHILDERS: There we go. I couldn't get my camera to come back on.

Let's see. So, as Greg mentioned, on the acting field manager for right now, and my day job is the associate field manager in Barstow. We have continued to work on our -- offering our passes for

both El Mirage and Dumont through rec.gov.

There was some concern with a recent court case out of Nevada for Red Rock State Park that had to do with using rec.gov as the sole process for getting permits and passes out. I think we have addressed that by the fact that we still have our other options available, fee machines and fee locations, and people can bypass this generally. So I don't think that's going to be an issue. We are going to continue to move forward with that.

We have a few minor things that are changing, as they moved rec.gov into a mobile app, we had to make a few changes in the stuff that we had to move that forward. So that should be coming online within the next month or two. We were hoping to have it done by the end of May, but just didn't quite get there. So hopefully we will get that lined out real quick in the next month or two and have that ready for the season.

Speaking of season things, Dumont Dunes Road, FHWA should have -- if they haven't released the contract, they should put that out on the ground for contract bids, so we should be able to start paving Dumont Dunes Road from 247 to the fee station, which will include the low water crossing at the end of

Amargosa River.

Hopefully we will have all that done -- all of the actual work, the paving work and the concrete work will all be done before the Halloween holiday. We are hoping that -- we are hoping that we don't have any issues.

We are going to be sending out some stuff on social media and probably a press release or two to talk about the upcoming construction work and what the people can expect as they go out to visit there. The Little Dunes will also be getting a little bit of gravel in the front, so that will help a little bit. Hopefully those two -- between those two areas, we can still give people access to the facilities during the whole season, during the off-season, the summer season, and when we get into October, we will know a little bit more about where we are as far as use, and people should be able to get out there.

There is stipulations in the contract to not have construction for that time period of Halloween and Nevada day, so hopefully that will be open for people, and we can get people out there.

Let's see. What else have I got here. I think that's about it for that. We are in the process for Calico Early Man Site. The remediation

work was completed on that, so we are working through a few minor things to remediate some potential hazards out there. And once we get those done, we will reopen that to the public.

And besides Chris's awesome work, if he continues to with the vole and the southwestern pond turtle and a number of different things, a great presentation -- he is a superstar. He does a lot of great things for us, and he continues to keep things going.

And I don't think I have anything else, Greg.

MR. MILLER: All right. Thanks, Jeff. You know, that brings to mind, I forgot to mention that, you know, we talked about the Amargosa vole and its recovery, but the BLM just recently was able to assist in taking the Stephen's kangaroo rat off of -- or down-list that from endangered to threatened, with a lot of the work that is being done on the fuel side of things from fire and fuels work that we do. So we were able to improve habitat and bring those populations back up and then assist in down-listing that species, which is really good.

All right. Let's go to El Centro with Ryan.

MR. CHATTERTON: All right. Just want to make sure folks can hear me well and see me. I had to navigate away from Zoom for my notes.

MR. MILLER: Good. You are good.

MR. CHATTERTON: All right. Thank you, Greg. I just want to highlight on a couple of additional topics and items that were not included in our report out there. All of the report-out items are up to date, and we provide the most up-to-date information on the various activities that are occurring throughout the El Centro field office.

We will go by some categories here. So let's touch on cultural resources.

MR. MILLER: Hey, Ryan. You got a second?

MR. CHATTERTON: Yep.

MR. MILLER: We are having a hard time hearing you. I think your microphone is kind of being -- is either weak or something, so it's just -- there you go.

MR. CHATTERTON: All right. We are going to switch it up. And my apologies. I have recently been having issues with those, and my computer mic is not the greatest, so, Greg, please interrupt me if I'm coming through bad, and I will try

another alternative if it doesn't work out.

MR. MILLER: Yeah, it's still a little light. How about we go ahead and --

MR. CHATTERTON: Why don't you go on, and come back to me.

MR. MILLER: Yep, that's what we will do. All right. Let's go to Mike next. Thanks, Ryan.

MR. AHRENS: All right. A little bit of trouble navigating all these buttons.

Thank you. Good afternoon. So, of course, we also provided a report. I'm not going to go over that whole report, but I'm certainly available for -- you know, to discuss any of the items in it that you might have questions about.

One update, though, from the report, and I did note in the report that we had hired a natural resources specialist to help us with our range program. We did do that, and sadly she was immediately stolen fair and square by another field office, and so we are back on the hunt for that NRS position. So, yeah, be watching for that, telling your natural resource specialist friends that Needles is looking for them and would be a wonderful place for them to work.

We did, actually, also hire an NRS

position for the national monument, and I don't have a start date yet for that position, but it's coming on as well. So looking forward to expanding those capabilities.

I would say, additionally, I wanted to say that in the last few weeks, we actually received funding through the bipartisan infrastructure legislation to do two projects. One is to create some additional trails, hiking trails at the Amboy Crater Recreation Area. I'm real excited to get that project going.

And then, also, we have been working on and are going to be able to continue to expand and work on some of our springs and doing some removal of invasive species and other spring enhancements, habitat enhancements at a number of springs. So those projects got funded. We are all super-excited about that and getting those projects started here in actually this year, this fiscal year.

And, then, so it was our intent to have Noelle -- to share some of my time with Noelle here today so that she could talk about the Mojave Trails National Monument and the planning effort. But, unfortunately, she's unable to attend today, so you're stuck with me. But going forward, that will be our

intent, to make sure that Noelle gets a good -- is available to you all in future meetings and what have you.

So Randy mentioned the Zoom meetings that we held in April, let's see, 16, 19, and 21. They are essentially the same content in each meeting. So the intent at those meetings was to focus on the planning effort and the way that BLM sees the planning go. Randy kind of alluded to some of that, some of those sideboards and some of the past planning that will be incorporated into the monument plan as it is developed. So there will be a written report that we are putting together on the findings from those Zoom meetings, and it should be published, we hope in July.

And, Randy, yeah, those meetings were indeed recorded. One of those meetings, recorded sessions, we intend also to post up on the web maybe in the next week or so, and we will send out a link to that to everybody that participated in them, so, you know, you can review it again yourself and/or even better, share that with your friends and what have you that you think would have an interest in the Mojave Trails National Monument and its planning effort.

So for now the rest of the year as far as the Mojave Trails National Monument planning

effort, we are going to continue to focus on our preplanning efforts. We have a little more -- some other data gaps with our cultural resources and our springs, you know, water information and what have you, so we are working to fill those gaps through some contracts.

We have a new DAC subgroup that we are very much looking forward to standing up with you guys and helping you guys with that. It's a super list, Randy. It's a bunch of old friends and a couple of new ones, looks like, too, so real eager and happy to get that group stood up and engaged in the planning effort.

And then we are going to continue our other public outreach on the plan, the Zoom meetings led to a lot of discussions from different interest groups and requests for Noelle to be involved at various discussions along the way. So she is doing as much of that as she can as well.

So that I think is what we are -- probably enough from the Needles field office for the moment, and it gives you a good idea where we are with the Mojave Trails planning effort. So that's all I have at this point, Greg.

MR. MILLER: All right, Mike. Thanks.

Hang on, Tim. I'm going to go back to Ryan after this. But I did want to say to the DAC members that Mike mentioned the bipartisan infrastructure law funds that we are promised. We haven't received that funding yet, but we were promised.

California was -- out of BLM, BLM was promised in just the restoration site of things, the ecological restoration \$20 million, California was promised 5 million of that, and the desert district itself was promised 3 million of that 5 million.

So we are going to be busy, and when that money hits, we are going to be pretty busy to try to put those projects into the pipeline to get those funded and on the -- get them going right away. So this is actually a no year money, but they want us to spend of much of it as we can in this FY.

Dick, you have something?

MR. HOLLIDAY: Yeah. I had a question for Mike on his report there just for -- there was a little article there on about the Brightline substation high-speed range station. And I noticed it said in here that the BLM determined that the NEPA previously prepared by the Federal Railroad Commission is not adequate to authorize these facilities. Then

the next sentences says, "The NFO will complete a separate environmental asset -- assessment to consider the facility's authorization."

So what are you going to do that was different than what was originally given to you?

MR. AHRENS: Okay. So thank you for asking that, Dick. So let's be specific that what we are talking about is the Ivanpah --

MR. HOLLIDAY: Substation.

MR. AHRENS: -- Substation. Substation, converter station --

MR. HOLLIDAY: Yes.

MR. AHRENS: -- specifically. In the previous FRA EIS that was done, that substation was actually in Baker. And in the new design, it's been moved up to Ivanpah. There's significantly more critical resources in that site and what have you. So, you know, it is not an EIS level document, but to shore up to make the NEPA compliance, you know, really more sustainable, we wanted to take a chance -- or not take a chance -- take our time to do an environmental assessment to further document really the protective measures that we have put into place to be able to fill that substation and still protect those critical resources.

MR. HOLLIDAY: So what you are going to do, you're going to give them more information on what they have to do to meet your requirements. Is that --

MR. AHRENS: Correct. Correct.

MR. HOLLIDAY: Okay.

MR. AHRENS: A lot of it really is the same. We have already worked with them on some design changes from their initial proposal and minimized impacts, you know, through those design changes. And so this environmental assessment will help us document that work and ensure that they are prepared to follow through with those terms and conditions to minimize the impacts.

MR. HOLLIDAY: Thank you very much.

MR. AHRENS: You are very welcome.

MR. MILLER: All right. Thanks Mike, and thanks for that question, Dick. Appreciate that.

All right. Let's go back to Mr. Chatterton in El Centro, and I'm sure he's got it all ready to go.

MR. CHATTERTON: We will see, Greg. Well, let's do a mic check just to check in here, see how the volume level is and see if there's any concerns with --

MR. MILLER: Sounds good so far.

MR. CHATTERTON: All right. Well, don't hesitate to interrupt me if anything comes up. This is my third and last microphone option, so if it doesn't work out, I will send you some notes, Greg, and maybe you can finish the report out for me.

But as I mentioned before, the report out that was provided to the DAC is up to date with the most recent information on the topics that was provided there.

I do have some additional items that I would like to cover in a few resource areas. We will start off with our cultural resources. We have been working with Imperial Valley Desert Museum with a curation of various items that have been placed with them -- it's a repository and curate for the El Centro field office. They are an approved repository for the cultural material that are recovered from the surrounding regions there, and it is nice that we have a resource that we are able to work with to have these resources stored locally here. We continue to work with them on public outreach and education efforts there and also provide them with supplies and materials that are needed for the curation of various resources that are in their care.

In the realm of lands and realty

management, we do have a right-of-way with the California Department of Water Resources for the Salt and Sea Species Conservation Habitat Project. The project in total covers about 3,770 acres of land. And of those, 488 acres are BLM-administered public lands. This project is currently in the construction phase. It was analyzed a while ago, I want to say back in 2017, but I don't remember right off the top of my head the exact timeframe of that.

But what that this project seems to do is to preserve habitat for migratory bird populations as well as the endangered pup fish out there, and it's slated to mitigate dust associated with playa that is being exposed.

We did have opportunity to tour the site recently, and it is amazing to see the work that is being conducted out there and look forward to that site coming on board. They probably have another year of construction associated with it, and then they will start pumping saline water as well as fresh water that's coming in from the local resources to create a habitat that is appropriate for these migratory birds and, again, the desert puff fish.

I do have an update here that was not included for the FMP Gold Corporation Exploration

Project. This is a drilling program that FMP Gold Corp. has proposed in the Cargo Muchacho Mountains and Eastern Imperial County. The project does propose to have some new, temporary, and permanent roads associated with their drilling program. There will be a street staging area for the Company to continue its underground mining activities within the area, and they will also have a helicopter access drill pad associated with the project.

We recently went through a scoping period associated with this project. That scoping period closed on April 4th, and the BLM did receive comment letters from the Environmental Protection Agency, the Native American Land Conservancy, the Desert Tortoise Council, and various conservation organizations such as Center for Biological Diversity Sierra Club Western Watersheds Project and also the Conservation Lands Foundation.

With those, we will begin the process of drafting an environmental assessment associated with it, and once complete, we will be able to put that out for public comment and review after that EA is pulled together.

For our recreation, we've had multiple activities going on. I just want to highlight a

couple of them. One, we were able to establish a new partnership and continue to strengthen our existing ones. Tread Lightly San Diego Off-Road Coalition, the California Off-Road Vehicle Association.

SC Must [ph] and Milestar Tire Company have all come together recently to assist with many clean-up events, at least two recently here that I can think of off the top of my head that was along the southern edge of the Coyote Mountain Wilderness. We met there and did some cleanup associated with various trigger trash, which is common in that area. The area is used for recreational shooting along Route 085 and other main routes around the Plaster City open OHV area.

So happy to continue our partnerships there and to address this. Although, you know, target shooting is an approved recreation activity, the littering that is associated with it is not. And so certainly we have some work to do to continue our efforts to address the littering that occurs in these areas from that activity.

We have also worked to improve the wilderness values, the naturalness, solitude and primitive recreation value to the Coyote and -- Mountain Wilderness area specifically. We have done

some work out at the Wind Caves Trailhead as well as the Fossil -- the Fossil Canyon, Coyote Mountain, and Meyers Valley.

Clark Roads, we have improved and installed new barriers within these areas, as we have had some recent notifications from members of the public about encouraging them to these wilderness areas. And so there was a need to address these access points and to ensure that the wilderness characteristics are able to continue to be in place and avoid the off-highway vehicle incursions into those wilderness areas.

And then, lastly, I will touch on our guided desert interpretive hike program. The most recent hike that we were able to do was more of a brief trail excursion out into the Hauser Geode Beds Site, and then we were able to hike around and do a little bit of rockhounding out there with members of the public to look for some geodes in Hauser Geode Beds.

It was a great opportunity to interact with members of the public and to be able to educate them on the various geology of the area and what to look for as you are out there conducting these rockhounding activities. We had one of our partners

out there. Let's see here. It was the Imperial Valley Gem and Mineral Society had representation out there, and we were able to talk about the MOU that we have in place for management of that area. It was a great day. I, myself, was able to participate in the activity and had a very enjoyable time there and bring my son out to enjoy that opportunity there.

So that's where I will end it today with my report out, but certainly happy to take any questions.

MR. MILLER: Thank you, Ryan. Any questions for Ryan? All right. I'm not seeing any hands.

Let's go ahead and move to Tim Gilloon, Palm Springs-Southcoast.

MR. GILLOON: Good afternoon. Just want to cover, as you indicated, we will touch on some monument stuff, and I'm not going to go too much in-depth on issues related to the report, but I will start with expanding on the Sand to Snow National Monument planning effort.

Currently, the vision is to sort of tier that and mirror that process to Mike's efforts over with the Mojave Trails National Monument, and we will have plenty of opportunity to do that.

Currently, that project is a little bit further behind in the planning process, also in terms of when we are planning on engaging with the public and can consider a subgroup from the DAC in the next year or the following related to this planning effort. But we are looking to push this project a little bit further just so that we can focus on some of the other issues that we have going on at projects and also to allow the Mojave Trails to really get some good focus and public involvement. So in general, that's the status of that planning effort for that national monument.

With both of our national monuments, our main ones that we have are the Sand to Snow, Santa Rosa and San Jacinto mountains. We work closely with the San Bernardino National Forest and the U.S. Forest Service on that on our staffing issues and our volunteers. Recently the camp post out of the Big Morongo preserve that was helping out us on our ACEC in in that area.

Dee Zeller, just recently retired, if you're familiar with him, so we have been working with the County and that friends group there to make sure that that is -- the work there has continued to picked up by volunteers or our partners with the County. The Friends of the Desert Mountain are also doing a really

great job providing volunteers and helping us out on the Santa Rosa and San Jacinto Mountains National Monument, again, helping us open up and staff the visitor center.

Some of you may have heard, we recently had a little bit of a break-in, not of the actual facility itself, but some of the outlying storage that we had there, I believe. And so we are working through those issues and just making sure that we are getting the support of the community, so we appreciate that.

Issues that abound on both monuments, of course, are unauthorized trails or signage issues. So -- and, of course, we have seen cattle in sensitive areas on both. Both monuments reports to that. So, again, we work with the community to address those issues and apply our resources to improve signage, get out there and work with our partners, try and maintain those sensitive areas.

Other projects that we have going on, the Morongo Com Sites EA [ph] finished up its public comment period, and so we are expecting a report back from our contractor on that and review that and go through that comment analysis.

Other projects, the Ship Creek Guzzler

EA that we are working with CDFW currently on hold for some admin and contracting issues, but we expect to have that one out some time and implemented around October or shortly thereafter. We are continuing to work with CDFW on our grants for OHV and getting signage and various improvements going on. We expect an EA in the future, in the near future to address recreation facility improvements around the Meccacopa -- Meccacopia OHV special recreation management area.

And also going on currently, we have just started our cleanup at the Inland Game Shooting Range with San Bernardino kangaroo rat, and so doing some cleanup options there for under a circle project as well as habitat and improvement for that species.

Let's see here. Other issues in general, again, we have been fielding a lot of complaints and questions, calls about access and illegal off-road use and other things. So again, we continue to work with our partners to make sure that we are getting law enforcement out, we are getting our signage in place, and just increasing our partnership efforts.

The other issues we have, of course, illegal shooting is still an issue, both in the desert

area as well as the Southcoast region. So we are -- our law enforcement are engaging with that, and we are trying to make sure that we are protecting our resources, because, again, you've got those fires that start. We just had when that happened in Southcoast. So, again, trying to work that issue.

Long-term planning for us, the Southcoast Resource Management Plan, we have got to get through some of these other major planning efforts before we can really start in earnest. But a lot of these issues I'm sure will come up during that planning effort in a couple of years once we get that -- once we get that planning effort started.

Greg mentioned the work that we have done to sort of reorganize our task organization. And so one of the unique things that we are going to be focusing on here is trying to amplify our public engagement, and the associate field manager, Janet Cheek, will be leading that effort and just trying to make sure that we are partnering, doing more outreach, and trying to bring more people and get that inclusive perspective there.

So, also, we are going to be restarting our quarterly meeting with our travel partners. And just -- that's as we move out of the pandemic

conditions, we are really excited to get to start working with people face to face, and we are looking forward to the fall's DAC meeting in person as well.

And, then, I would like to close out with giving some kudos to our staff. I want to recognize a lot of my realty staff and our resources staff in conjunction with doing all of our renewable energy work and our other lands workload for various utilities and, you know, working the land' ten-year actions, special usage permits. We are also processing those film permits. So, Dan, I know you will be happy to hear that.

And, also, we had another staffing person retire out of Dos Palmas, Billy Pope. And so kudos to our maintenance and park ranger folks. They are doing some overtime for them voluntarily, just making sure that we are keeping that facility up and running and getting that taken care of.

And then, finally, I will put a plug out for anybody who knows people looking for work and want to come work and be partners with us. We are looking for maintenance, park rangers, archaeologists, anticipate some program manager positions and, also, we have got one more law enforcement position we are still looking to -- still looking to fill. So, again,

put the word out. We would like to see some more applicants, especially diversity applicants, just to make sure that we are hiring the best people and doing our outreach with the community and working with all of our public.

That's it. End of report for Palm Springs-Southcoast, pending any questions.

MR. MILLER: All right. Thanks, Tim. Any questions for Tim? Dan.

MR. TAYLOR: Yeah. You had mentioned that there's some issues with illegal shooting. Is this something that is districtwide, all the different districts are having issues with that? I know Barstow was having issues with illegal pot grows. Is illegal shooting something that is consistent across the board, or is it happening just in one region, from what we know?

MR. MILLER: I can answer that, Tim. First, Palm Springs-Southcoast, it's a unique area. The Southcoast area is really close to a lot of communities. And so a lot of those areas are opposed to shooting, recreational shooting or any kind of target shooting at all. Many other areas across the district, Ridgecrest, Needles, Palm -- or, excuse me, Barstow, and El Centro.

El Centro does have some areas that are sensitive as well, but, also, most of those -- a lot of those areas are open. Maybe not as much of an issue with illegal shooting, but the issue is trigger trash, we call it, you know. Just making -- there's a lot of individuals who are very excited about taking their new weapon out into the field and shooting up whatever they can shoot up. And then but all that brass, all those shotgun shells, all those target materials maintain -- are left on the ground, and it is a large cleanup for BLM. And it happens a lot, and every year we are doing the cleanup.

MR. BAGLEY: Yeah, that is disappointing that, you know, we have got the off-roaders, who are really good at cleaning up whatever the use, you know. If this was a place where they could legally shoot, clean up after yourselves, you know. That is sad to hear that that is happening, and I am all for more money for the law enforcement to be able to curtail some of these issues.

MR. MILLER: Thanks, James.

MR. GILLOON: Yeah, and I will be conducting more outreach to some of the communities in that area just to make sure that we are letting people know that especially during these fire closure areas

that, hey, we need to, you know, pay attention to our resources. Do things the right way. And, also, that is going to be setting the stage for, as I mentioned before, our Southcoast Resource Management Planning. I think this will be probably a topic that will be discussed in detail as we try and make sure that -- we recognize that resource or that recreation public use is a need. We just need to make sure it is done responsibly.

MR. TAYLOR: Thank you, Tim. Thank you, Greg.

MR. MILLER: I believe that, Jayne, you had a question?

MS. POWELL: Yes. I'm not a shooter and I don't have a gun, but would it be appropriate to have a designated area for people to do target practice? Because the shot that comes out of the shells is wet, or at least it used to be, and that creates pollution in the soil that is toxic to a lot of things. So if we had some designated confined spaces that people could use, would that be something appropriate?

MR. GILLOON: Yes, that's something that is likely going to be an option in our planning in the future. Arizona BLM, Colorado, I know I worked

on it a lot in the forest service. There's a lot of other places that just recognize as we have population growth extending closer to our public lands for some of that rural and just getting out there, it's becoming an issue.

And so case in point is the Inland Fish and Game Range cleanup that is going on. A lot of the lead and toxicity built up over the decades of shooting at that facility is having to go through certain cleanup action. And so what we find is in certain areas where you have undesignated -- you have open shooting, people like to congregate and go to areas that are familiar. And so one of the things I would be looking at is reaching out to the community and trying to locate and find those areas and try and just make sure that we get a little bit more outreach to the public and say, "Is this a better option? Is this a better way to provide responsible recreational sports shooting?"

So that is probably going to be a topic and an option that we look at in the future.

MS. POWELL: Thank you.

MR. BANIS: And, if I may, regulating recreational shooting is different than regulating hunting. Two different paths and two different

courses for doing so. And sometimes one gets confused for the other, particularly if one's hearing somebody. They may think, oh, gee, recreational shooting is loud, when maybe there is only hunting going on, or vice versa.

MR. GILLOON: Yes.

MS. POWELL: Well, I was thinking of recreational shooting as basically like target practice.

MR. GILLOON: Yes.

MR. MILLER: Mr. Stovin.

MR. STOVIN: Oh, thanks. I just wanted to chime in. I spoke to a previous Palm Springs field office manager about shooting in a particular area, and he said that concentrating the lead in the area, the lead can seep down into the water, and it can create a real problem for an area and that they prefer it to be dispersed.

Some of you might be familiar with the term Superfund. If you get too much lead in one area, you can have a real problem, so as much as they'd like to concentrate it in an area, that could cause difficult problems.

So, Tim, I commented on the state parks grant you guys wrote, and I asked a couple of

questions. I haven't heard back. Maybe you could have them get back to me. One of them was you mentioned four camping areas that off-road vehicle users use. I wasn't sure which ones those were.

MR. GILLOON: Okay. I will get with Dan Casank [ph], and I will follow up with you next week or the following on that.

MR. STOVIN: Yeah, that would be great. I would appreciate it.

MR. GILLOON: Okay. And just for addressing your comment about the concentration of shooting, when we consider shooting areas now, usually there's some sort of lining or engineering controls that we use to mitigate or reduce the amount of leaching that happens from those concentrated areas.

The challenge is, is right now we have people that are naturally organically concentrating their shooting and their fires and their debris and one particular area, and there is no planning. There is no environmental controls or engineering controls to account for that.

So it's happening already. We just need to make sure we address and hopefully better plan on how to mitigate those and make that a responsible shooting location. But, yes.

MR. MILLER: All right. Thanks, Tim.

Let's go ahead and continue moving on and go to Mr. Symons out of Ridgecrest.

MR. SYMONS: Hey, good afternoon. I'm not going to redo the stuff in the report, but I will do some updates where we have some changes from when we put the report together. Out there for LADWP, we are working on the places like dams. We're working on two fiber-optics lines, one to the southern end up near the dam we have already processed, but the northern one we are still having cultural testing being done. There's been a lot of inadvertent discoveries in association with the dam, so we want to do some testing to make sure that before they trench to put that line in that we can find as many of those as we can and mitigate that.

On the cultural side, we have found a well in a cultural district that has an offensive name, and so we sent letters out to the tribes and to the BLM actual lead, so looking at trying get that renamed. We just found that located on the maps -- just a few weeks ago, so we are entering into that process.

As far as grazing, we are still working with the Deep Springs College, and we are trying to do

Russian thistle weed eradication. Up in a Fish Lake Valley, we are -- we have got one fenced off area and one area that won't be fenced off that we are trying different methods to see if we could try to get a handle on the Russian thistle weed problem up there they have going.

We are working on Yeager Solar Project. We do have a project manager assigned for that. Carrie Woods is going to be the project manager for that project. She is doing a detail right now, but when she is kind of wearing more than one hat, which is fairly common, but she will be doing that. And, then, this will be our second solar project that we are doing under DRECP. Hopefully it will be an EA, same as our first one that we had going through.

We are also working on the widening of Olancha 395, where it is going around Olancha. They have found some things that were being helped out by Bishop. They're actually taking the lead for cultural on that. Lot of it -- most of it is up in the Bishop field office, but there has been a few finds that are on our side of the line, so we've been working with them.

We do have two lithium proposals -- well, one lithium project that in Panamint Valley that

is there. It's kind of on hold. We are waiting on some cultural reports from the applicant before we can move forward on that. And then recently we had an inquiry, a person wants to do lithium on Searles Dry Lake. The issue with that is that we do have a solid leasable, Searles Valley Minerals. It's on that lakebed, and they are under two different ones. The lithium is under locatables and under the regulations, whereas the solid leasables that Searles Valley Minerals operates under. So we are still waiting to see whether or not the person wants to pursue that in there.

But for those that are familiar with Searles Valley, they do inject brine solution in and then pull it out, and then they drop out the chemicals that -- minerals that they are looking to sell and then put the water back into the dry lake bed. So it is already circulating that water and minerals through dryers.

Another thing working on in mining is that there's a number of small mines that are right on the verge that had to get plan of operations. But they are now expanding to the point where they are going to be covered under SMARA, so we are trying to work with the counties to try to make sure that those

small mining operations are compliant with SMARA. That is part of our permitting operation that we do. They have to be in compliance with that as well. And so some of them aren't used to dealing with SMARA, so it's a little different process that we are trying to go through.

We are also working on a land sale proposal for the Golden Queen Mine. That's a large goldmine there outside of Mojave that they want to buy a piece of property there. It was brought up in the original environmental assessment years and years ago when they permitted the mine. It is inside the fenced area of the -- mine, so they would like to get the surface rights on that.

On the recreation side, some of the things we are doing, California city is wanting to get an R&PP lease. There is some property, isolated BLM parcels that are right near some of their big recreation. They have a highway vehicle program there that they would like to add an addition to that to the parks they were working on.

We're also -- it's partly wildlife, partly recreation, but the DTRNA, the naturalist is out there, and this year we did fix up a new trailer for the outreach for people to go in. It is

interpretive trailer. And then with the help of -- assistance of the Barstow field office, we were able to borrow one of their travel trailers so that the main naturalist and the relief naturalist don't have to share a trailer, trying to -- with the COVID situation going on. So we actually put two trailers out there, one for each worker out there to try to help reduce exposure on that. So appreciate that from the Barstow field office, letting us have one of their trailers for the season.

We are doing a lot of film permits. Most recently we had a perfume commercial with well over 100 people out there and props in front of pinnacles. They were trying to do it, and it was getting kind of hot out there, and they were beginning to get some complaints from some of the people that were out there, the models that got I guess really sunburned, didn't realize that -- didn't bring sunscreen. I'm sure it's more amusing to me than it was to the people that got burnt. So it's definitely getting hot out there this time of year.

Some of the other things we are doing with the wild horse and borrow, we did have to shut down the Gather early due to the logistical problems and some other stuff. Some of the areas we wanted to

go had to cross Searles Valley Lake Bed with their operation, which we could only do on weekdays. But we could only fly in the military, which is where we were running the burros out of on the weekends, so it just -- they didn't match, and they were having a lot of problems. Plus, as I said, it was getting hotter, and a lot of the burros were going higher and just couldn't push the burros that far without risking any injury heat problems with the burros, so we ended up quitting. We ended up getting 181 burros out of the Gather. We were hoping to get almost 500, but as I said, it just didn't work out for that.

Some of the things, we do have our range person on board now. We have hired a natural resource specialist as well. We are still waiting on the -- we've got two wildlife biologist positions vacant. The cert to close or the announcements close, we are waiting on the certs for those.

We did hire a supervisory law enforcement ranger, so we are still waiting for a start date along with the natural resource specialist. Then our wild horse and burro corrals are done a couple of positions, which has really been hampering their ability to do a lot of the operations. We have some staff that is helping fill in here and there at

critical times, but those two announcements should hopefully go on the street within the next week. I'm hoping maybe this coming week to be out on the street.

We did do interviews for the geologist, and we are still -- we picked -- we made a selection, but we are waiting to see if they will actually accept the position. I just submitted that up at the end of this week.

Any other things, our building is now back in operation. We are moved back into the building. We've still got a lot of files and other stuff to put away, but people are generally back in the office. It will be fully opened on the 23rd. Doors open, but staff will -- some staff will still be teleworking, so I advise people to make calls and make an appointment if they are trying to look for a specialist, because if you stop by, they may be teleworking that day. So it's something -- the new way we are doing business with the teleworking that will be going on that -- trying to make sure that any one time that somebody is in the office. It's best to plan ahead and make an appointment for that.

Those are the highlights, unless somebody has got some questions.

MR. MILLER: Thanks, Carl. Ed, do you

have your hand up still? Did you have a question, sir? Okay. There you go --

MR. STOVIN: Sorry, I can never put it down.

MR. MILLER: Okay. All right. Any questions for Carl?

Okay. Let's move along, and we have, last but not least is Freddie Espinoza, our assistant district field -- excuse me, fire officer for the Desert District Interagency Fire Program. Take it away, Freddie.

MR. ESPINOZA: All right. Good afternoon. Thanks, Greg. So, yeah, I just -- we put that report in also and just have a few updates on some of the categories in that, so I'll just kind of go over those.

So fire incidents have increased since we've submitted that. We've had eight additional fires within the program area for an additional little over eight and a half acres, so we are up to about twenty three and a half acres of fires on the district, and we are expecting that to increase as we continue into the summer.

Let's see. So we are continuing to make some additional progress on our fuels projects.

So the total acreage to date has increased a little bit, so we've gotten about 6,332 acres completed in our fuels treatment.

Let's see. The mitigation and education projects, so we have folks staffing, you know, since the opening of the L.A. County Fair. We have got that started on May 5th, and we've got folks staffing that at the America's Great Outdoors Exhibit.

So far they have contacted about 3,000 people. Normally, they usually get a little bit more contact when the school districts would bring their fourth graders there, but they're not doing that this year, because, you know, they're getting back into the -- out of the COVID era. So -- but they are out there and contacting people, giving the fire prevention message and talking about our BLM lands.

Still making some progress. We've got all of our seasonal employees, and things are staffing up for the summer for our fire modules.

We have recently participated in some career fairs at some of our California Conservation Core facilities here in -- one over there by Lake Elsinore and the other one in San Bernardino. Those were pretty successful. And we just did another one at Victor Valley College, so we're trying to reach out

to folks to, you know, get some more folks into the BLM. We're focusing on the fire program, but we also include all the other staff areas in the BLM when we do those fairs.

I think that's about all I have for updates, Greg, unless there's any questions.

MR. MILLER: Thanks, Freddie. Any questions for Freddie? I don't see any hands coming up.

I do want to say that we did -- the district did just publish their new fire instructions about, what, two weeks ago, Freddie, or a little bit more? So we're --

MR. ESPINOZA: Yes --

MR. MILLER: Yeah, go ahead.

MR. ESPINOZA: Those went into effect on May 2nd, so that we went into stage 1 and stage 2 fire restrictions throughout the district.

MR. MILLER: And, then, that's online, if you wanted to find out where those -- a little bit more restrictive on what you can use. There's no more -- anyway, I can't get into it a little bit more. I don't know exactly what it is, but -- without reading it.

All right. One more thing I would like

to say before we close out the BLM side of this thing, Randy, is that it's been, what, since mid-March of 2020 that most of the offices for the BLM have been closed to the public and not open at all. There are some BLM offices that were open certain days of the week or by appointment or something like that.

But starting the 31st of May, all offices will be open for BLM for the public five days a week. That's when BLM employees will be going back to work full time. They will be under their telework agreements. There will be somebody either in the office all the time to answer -- to address the public that comes in and answer phones and stuff like that; however, there are some that are still going to be working telework. They won't be there five days a week, but they will be there a couple days a week or at least two days a pay period is what our policy calls for.

So I'm looking forward to that, actually being in the office and seeing more people, even though my drive to Palm Springs is an hour, but that's okay. It's nice.

But, anyway, I think that's it for the BLM folks, Randy, and I will turn it back over to you.

MR. BANIS: Well, terrific. Thank you

for that report and thanks as always for getting the report done to us early, and we have a chance to look at it a couple of days in advance, because it is very thorough.

For members of the public, if you haven't seen the report, you can obtain that on the Desert Advisory Council's webpage. It's easy to get to. Just go to your favorite search engine and type Desert Advisory Council. Boom. There it is.

So thank you, Greg. Appreciate it. Thanks to the whole team for the update. We are still doing very well on time. We have another presentation in front of us, which is something different. We are having a presentation.

This one is -- let me make sure I'm on the right page. Here we are. This presentation is going to be on the National Renewable Energy -- by the National Renewable Energy Laboratory, researcher Paul Denholm, and he is joining us today to talk about battery energy storage systems, which have become increasingly important as we expand renewable energy projects in the desert.

So I would like to give Paul a second to get situated, and the floor is now all yours. Thank you for joining us today, Paul. Welcome to the

Desert Advisory Council.

MR. DENHOLM: Sure, great. Happy to be here. And so I am a researcher at the National Renewable Energy Laboratory. I work on grid integration of renewable energies, focusing on basically how do we get utilities that want to get more wind and solar on the power grid. I -- I help those utilities, so I work in a lot of different states.

I worked on the Los Angeles Renewable Energy Plan for 100 percent renewables, and a big focus of my work is on energy storage, not just battery storage but all different storage technologies.

Excuse me a second. Let me just close off the door here.

So I'm going to be talking a little bit about battery storage for the grid, and my focus is really on the grid. I don't really know much about transportation applications other than the battery I have in my car. But let me go ahead and kind of give you an overview of what we are talking about.

So we are talking about stationary battery systems here. So here's two examples. The left one is kind of a cartoon of what a

battery -- grid battery looks like. And so you have basically got a bunch of modules. That is the battery modules are -- essentially, there's just many, many of the little lithium ion batteries you have in your phone or in your flashlight. It's the same thing, just thousands or tens of thousands of these small batteries all put in these containers and ultimately connected into the grid via an inverter.

It's the same technology that is used in photovoltaics. They convert the DC electricity into kind of the grid compatible AC electricity, step it up through a transformer, and that's all there is to it. There's not, you know, much in the way of moving parts, and there's fans to keep things cool. But there's not much in the way of water or any other complicated issues like you have with conventional thermal power plants.

The image on the right is an actual installation, so that's a San Diego Gas & Electric installation, just under 40 megawatts in capacity. So that's just kind of what they look like.

The technology that we are typically talking about is lithium ion. So there's tons of different batteries. I think most people are probably familiar now with lithium ion batteries. Before that

it was -- you know, people knew about lead acid batteries, which is your car battery that you use to start your engine. But most of the batteries being installed are lithium ion batteries, really benefiting from the technology improvements on, again, the technology developed for your cell phones but now primarily in electric vehicles.

These are pretty efficient. They can return about 85 percent of the energy put into them. That is compared to, say, a pump hydro plant, which is going to typically be a little bit less than that, maybe 75 percent round-trip efficiency.

And with careful controls, and this is a big difference between a stationary application on your phone. You probably -- your phone probably is not going to last ten years. You probably have all experienced the fact that, you know, two, three, four years later your battery in your phone doesn't last as long. But carefully managed stationary batteries, they are warranted for much longer than that, and we expect, you know, 10 plus years. People say 15. I'm a little conservative. I typically think of a 10- to 12-year lifetime. But we are seeing substantially longer lives in stationary applications than we do in your cell phone.

So these are really flexible. They could be scaled up and down in size, and the vast, vast majority of batteries being installed are this particular lithium ion technology.

One of the nice things about a battery technology as opposed to a traditional thermal power plant or something like a pump storage plant is you could build these very quickly. I mean if you look at what those installations look like, they look very modular in nature. You're going to have maybe a building, depending on the size, that -- again, these are going to be largely prefab.

So these things can go in really, really quickly, and so that's one of the nice things about battery storages. Once you've got the permitting and everything else, you can put these in really fast.

So why we are talking about storage is this basically source of great flexibility. And the simplest way is a source of peaking energy. The basic idea is you are storing electricity during off-peak periods in the middle of the night or increasingly kind of in the early afternoon when the sun is up, and then discharging that in that hot summer afternoon.

So typically this is a 4 to 8 p.m. is

when these things want to be discharged. Particularly in kind of summer hot peaking systems where the air conditioning demand peaks around 4 to 8 p.m. or 3 to 7 p.m. That is when these batteries are going to be discharged. So that application is the primary interest that a lot of utilities have right now to install these technologies.

And, of course, increasingly they are being used to address the overproduction or the abundance of solar energy that we have during the late morning to early afternoon. So this is the kind of famous duck curve, which is essentially showing that net demand or when you think about the normal demand for electricity and you subtract out the contribution from solar in the middle of the day, you're kind of carving out this belly of the duck.

And the idea is as California and other places put more and more solar onto the grid, they had this reduced demand for electricity in the middle of the day. And at some point, and we have already seen this, you actually have more energy from the sun than you can actually use on the grid. And so the idea is to use storage to store that energy in the middle of the day and then to discharge that later in the afternoon.

So why are we seeing this resurgence of storage or the interest in batteries? It is because the costs are coming down. And we see this trend across multiple renewable technologies. This is a -- basically showing if you kind of go back and start at some fixed point in time ten years ago or say -- ten years ago and say, okay, how much has the cost been reduced on a percentage basis, you can see that the cost of PV, photovoltaics, wind, they are coming down, but the cost of battery packs, lithium ion battery packs have come down tremendously in the last ten years and now are a cost-competitive option for utilities.

So increasingly, basically what that means is ignoring renewable portfolio standards, ignoring climate, you know, concerns, just on a simple economic basis, if you don't care at all about, you know, environmental issues and are just looking at it on a pure cost basis, battery is now cost competitive with traditional peaking assets. Those are basically gas turbines, same type of thing you see on a jet engine. There's basically a powerplant version of that, and batteries are now cost competitive with those technologies that are used to meet that peak demand, that kind of four-hour peak demand in those

hot summer afternoons.

So here's an example of, you know, again, more specifically the cost, the absolute cost now on the cost of the module. And the numbers don't really matter other than we have seen this significant decrease in costs. And the point is that at these current levels, again, they are cost competitive.

I'm going to skip this one. We have done a bunch of modeling at NREL to kind of break down these costs to understand the source of continued cost declines so that what we can do at NREL, what I do for a living, is understand what the potential opportunities are for further cost reductions, and what does that translate into the actual ability of utilities to increase the use of energy storage.

So here is just an example of how we are modeling the different components: the battery module itself, the cost of laying down the concrete pad and some of those other things, which isn't going to come down very much other than kind of learning by doing. But the technology cost are so focused on the battery modules themselves.

So we do a bunch of these kinds of things, and we come up with curves that look like this to show what the potential opportunities are. And the

point of this is just showing that under kind of standard, you know, even ignoring, again, policy constraints, we expect a very large growth in batteries in this country for stationary application in the coming decades.

So, again, these would be accelerated if there were more aggressive renewable standards or climate action. But, again, under a business as usual scenario, we see very, very large opportunities for stationary storage. So we expect this to be a real thing increasingly in the coming years and decades.

And it's not just us. A lot of people are projecting these large growths. But one of the interesting things is it's going to be really still dominated by electric vehicles. That green slice there, it looks small, and it is maybe small on a relative basis, but it's really only small because, you know, vehicles have so much more battery kind of per person.

If you think about how much battery you need for your car versus how much battery you need to help support your grid, it's a lot more in the vehicle. So that's why we see these trends setting. It's going to be really dominated by vehicle applications. But that doesn't -- you know, that

doesn't get to the issue of, you know, there is still going to be huge growth for stationary applications.

So I know I went through that really quickly, but I wanted to make sure there would be time for questions, and so I could kind of address your interests and your concerns about the future of this technology and where it might be going.

MR. BANIS: Thank you, Paul. That was great of you to join us and put that together.

MR. DENHOLM: Sure.

MR. BANIS: I'm going to bring up my participant list and see who has their hands up. To no surprise, thank you, Dick. Dick Holliday has the first question.

MR. HOLLIDAY: Yeah. Thank you, Paul. That was very interesting. I'm glad you showed the duck curve, because that is a big issue in California.

I have a couple of questions on this battery thing as far as the batteries are charging. We are having -- and as I mentioned to our people before, we are having a lot of curtailment in California just because, well, like you showed there in that duck curve, we have much more energy in the afternoons than we can have, and there's reasons that we can't just from a control standpoint for the

frequency, we can't use all of the solar that we have. Are these plants set up so that the solar could charge the batteries even if they are not connected to the power grid?

MR. DENHOLM: Yeah. So I am a -- full disclosure, I am a big grid guy. So I don't work on distributed applications, and my kind of personal bias is I like to see large grids, just because they tend to be more cost-effective. But they absolutely can be, you know, connected in such a way that they can charge directly off of the solar.

The application that I think will probably be most cost-effective is changing the configuration of a PV plus storage hybrid so that you can charge directly off of the solar that way and still be connected to the grid. So that is kind of the best of both worlds.

You can maximize the efficiency of charging by not taking the PV -- instead of taking the PV, putting it into the grid, and then putting it back into the battery and kind of going through all those electronics and those steps, the voltage is up and down, if you couple that into a hybrid configuration, you can charge the battery more or less directly off of the -- off of the solar with minimal conversion

losses. And we are seeing increased interest and deployments of these things.

Just FYI, if you're interested, they're called DC-coupled hybrids, so you can kind of Google that. We have published some papers there. I can share that with you. But that is that technology. It's called a DC-coupled PV plus battery hybrid. And I think that's -- I don't like saying, "Oh, that is the future," but, you know, that probably is the future.

MR. HOLLIDAY: And the other interesting thing that you said there that primarily concerned was for peaking, which I'm pretty familiar with. We used to have jet peakers. I don't know if they -- they probably still do. I've been retired a long time. But from 4 to 8 p.m., that seems to be when we are ramping up our generators --

MR. DENHOLM: Yes.

MR. HOLLIDAY: -- in order to carry the in the evening and overnight. But you're not going to be charging these batteries up at night, because they are primarily set up for solar charging, I would guess. Otherwise, you are going to be using -- you're going to be using fossil fuel plants to charge them, which isn't really very good.

MR. DENHOLM: Yeah. So I think the idea that a lot of people think about in terms of when these get charged is, you would have some overnight charging, particularly with surplus wind. So maybe not so much in California, but here in Colorado, throughout much of the Midwest into Texas, you get an oversupply of wind during the middle of the night.

And so in places with a little bit less high-quality solar -- so if we are not talking about like the Desert Southwest, you have a little bit more balance between solar and wind. But, yeah, in places that are solar dominated, you would really expect to see large amounts of solar charging from, say, you know, 11 a.m. to 2 p.m. Yeah.

MR. HOLLIDAY: And you anticipate -- I was the -- I was the first power scheduler for the Edison company back in the sixties, and I used to get power from the Northwest and bring it down to Oroville Thermalito and pump storage at night, because we could pump at night and take it the next day.

MR. DENHOLM: Yep.

MR. HOLLIDAY: Do you anticipate -- like in the springtime you have a lot of excess hydropower coming out of the Northwest. Do you anticipate that some of these battery chargers would

be charged up by that?

MR. DENHOLM: Absolutely. I mean, you know, batteries don't care where the electrons come from. So if it is coming from surplus electricity down the DC intertie or through whatever, you know, the AC connections in the Pacific Northwest, that works, too.

So as part of the LA 100 study, we spent quite an amount of time studying LAWPs pump storage assets and how they would change operation as well. So, yeah, I am a big fun fan of pumped hydro, too.

MR. HOLLIDAY: All right. Well, thank you. I appreciate this. I was the one that I asked -- I think I wanted to see a little bit more information on these to get a little bit more of what the current technology is for battery storage, and I think you are right.

What is your feeling as a 10-year life or 15-year life as far as recycling these batteries?

MR. DENHOLM: Yeah. So we are in the early stages of the recycling aspects. I mean we work a lot on that in terms of at NREL and others. I don't know. I often think of these as self-healing or, you know, self-solving problems; right? I mean lithium

and cobalt, I mean these are valuable assets.

And if you think about, you know, a lithium ion battery is a great, you know, mining resource, right, if you think about it. You know, when you mine something off of the ground, you know, the concentration of that resource is fairly low. And in lithium ion battery, you have significant volumes of these valuable materials.

So there are -- I don't want to trivialize it. It's an important topic, and there are -- it's not a completely solved problem, but ultimately, I do think it will be a solved problem with appropriate combination of regulation and good old-fashioned, you know, value of materials.

MR. HOLLIDAY: Thank you.

MR. DENHOLM: Yep.

MR. BANIS: Thanks, Dick. Jayne, you have the floor.

MS. POWELL: Thank you. I was recently at a pre-application planning meeting for a commercial lithium ion battery storage facility for facilities that's proposed to be constructed down in San Diego County. And there was a huge outcry from the public that attended because of the fear of fires related to the lithium battery storage facility.

I was wondering if you guys had any input on helping to waylay the community's concerns about fire, especially given the fire situation in California.

MR. DENHOLM: Yeah. So there's a couple things there. So that's not something I work on, but there are other parts of the Department of Energy as well as groups at NREL that are far more familiar with that. But there is a number of working groups kind of at the national level, the fire protection code people and all that. So I think the best thing would be me to kind of, you know, forward some resources on that.

I mean I think one of the challenges of batteries compared to everything else is the newness of the technology. I mean, you know, when a house catches on fire because of bad wiring, or a powerplant catches on fire, it kind of barely makes the news. But when a battery catches on fire, it does make the news, because it is new. So I think, you know, we're used to houses burning down because of faulty wiring. I mean obviously, again, I don't want to trivialize that, but part of it is the newness of the technology. And then, of course, we had some early-stage technology issues that always have to get worked

through.

So, you know, but in terms of like factual data or information, I would have to -- I would have to get that to you.

MS. POWELL: That would be great, if you could send me the context or a link. Thank you.

MR. BANIS: Are there other hands, DAC members?

I have a question in the meantime. Paul, you mentioned -- you attributed much of the growing use of these battery systems to the economics of supply increasing and, therefore -- and demand increasing, supply increasing, and the price going down. But aren't projects, solar projects, for example, in most places now required to have a battery storage component as well --

MR. DENHOLM: No, that is not a requirement. Most places do not have a requirement. Most places -- the driver is, you've got portfolio standards, but, you know, with the value of solar in places like California declining because it is no longer providing, you know, useful energy during -- not huge amounts of the year. I mean it's still really super-valuable in June, July, and August. But in the spring midday, electricity, the value of

that has dropped a lot, so you are still seeing the economic motivation. So it is primarily economics.

There are some places that they require it, but there's not a, you know, wholesale -- you know, most states, national level, there aren't -- there aren't requirements yet.

MR. BANIS: Very good. The floor is still open. There you go, Dick. Go ahead. Come on in.

MR. HOLLIDAY: Well, I got another question, as far as this. When you put these battery facilities in associated with a solar plant, is any of that controllable from the electric company? Do they -- they must come out and tell the battery people to turn their battery on, or how are they doing that?

MR. DENHOLM: Yeah, that's a great -- I mean that's what I do for living. Okay. So, basically, in places like California, yeah, you're required to give information to the system operator in California, and you've got basically two options. You can either do what is called self-scheduling where you tell the independent system operator, "Here's what I'm going to do," or you let the independent system operator control the battery.

And, then, the decision to do that,

that is financial stuff, you know. But, technically, there's no problem in giving direct control to these systems and controlling them very accurately. These things are fantastic in terms of their performance from the utility operator standpoint. These things are really responsive and very controllable.

So, technically, no problem. Most of the issues are -- the differences are kind of on the financial and the kind of business agreements side of things.

MR. HOLLIDAY: When I worked, my people used to go and install equipment at new generating facilities so that we could monitor their -- and we would also send pulses out to raise and lower -- are these in such a way that they can turn them on for a period of time, or do they turn them on and let them run down or ...

MR. DENHOLM: You can do basically anything. They can follow an automatic generation control signal. I mean you can send every three seconds raise and lower signals. They will follow that better than any thermal power plant in existence. Yeah, there's really no problem with controlling these directly.

And, again, the difference between how

you just do it full discharge for hours, or do you, you know, follow the signal, that's a business decision as opposed to a technical one. Again, technically, they could do anything you want.

MR. HOLLIDAY: Yeah, that's good.

Well, I used to have a -- I used to have an uninterrupted power supply that drove my energy control center, and we just had -- back then we just had lead acid batteries. That carried the office for 30 minutes when that power dropped. Okay.

MR. DENHOLM: Yeah, you still see a bunch of lead acid batteries and substation batteries, but, you know, they don't get used very often, so no big deal there.

MR. HOLLIDAY: Yeah. Well, they will be changing them out one day, probably.

MR. DENHOLM: Yeah, yeah.

MR. HOLLIDAY: All battery -- all substations operate on DC anyway, all their breakers.

MR. DENHOLM: Yeah.

MR. HOLLIDAY: All right. Thank you again.

MR. DENHOLM: Sure.

MR. BANIS: Hey, Jayne, go ahead. Take another. Take another.

MS. POWELL: My next question is -- and in full disclosure, we have a new house, and we had solar at our old house and putting solar on the new house. And I asked all the different solar panel salespeople that came about battery storage, and I got a barrage of answers and quotes. And based on everything else with the new house, it was not in the financial picture.

But my question relates to the effectiveness of the residential battery storage. I know Tesla, for example, advertises that. Do you see that continuing to develop as an element of the home, residential solar systems? And do you think the price will ultimately come down and the storage capacity go up enough to make it financially viable for the everyday person?

MR. DENHOLM: Yeah, that is a fantastic question. And it's tough. So part of it is, you know, again, my bias is towards, you know, big systems; right? So when I look at economies of scale, you're just never going to get the economy of scale from residential installation compared to a distribution cited or a large-scale facility.

So, ultimately, it's really going to come down to the individual's choices in terms of

things like resiliency and backup power. So, you know, what's -- I mean my power never goes out here, so, you know, I have never lived in a place where power goes out very frequently, so I can't really -- you know, I don't really understand what that is like. But, you know, obviously, if my power went out once a month or something like that, or I was in a critical situation with a member of my household relying on medical equipment or something like that, I think I would be far more in tune with the opportunities there.

Right now, the economics really don't make sense for most residential consumers. You know, the cost differentials of time of use pricing aren't there yet. It's going to head in that direction. The question is, is it going to be five years from now, ten years from now? I really don't know.

But, again, a big part of it is going to be this -- I think it will never make sense on a pure economic standpoint. It will be economics of it plus that resiliency/reliability benefits.

The link I'm sharing on the questions page is to our energy storage future study, and one of the things that we did in that large study is a series eight reports or something like that. One of them

actually is on distributed applications where we did some modeling to understand consumer adoption trends and the importance of things like resiliency and backup power to that. So I would say maybe start there.

And, yeah, I'm mostly a central power person, so I'm not sure I can really say much more than that.

MS. POWELL: Thank you.

MR. BANIS: Floor is open. Any additional questions, comments for Paul or for the DAC?

Well, thank you. Thanks, Paul, and thank you, DAC members for the really good questions. Jayne, Dick, you guys are sharp, way sharp.

What we would like to do, a priority in these meetings, as you all know, is receiving public comment. And public comment is scheduled for 2:45 today. We are running a little ahead of schedule, and rather than -- I would like the public to count on being able to begin their public comment at 2:45. So if there's no objections, why don't we move into the 3:15 item. That would be where we discuss items for future agendas, and we take the steps to elect a chair.

We will see how close that gets us to the 3:30 hour, and then we will see where we go from there. Does that sound good, everybody?

UNIDENTIFIED SPEAKER: Good idea.

MR. BANIS: Great.

THE REPORTER: The only thing that I have to say, Mr. Banis, is that my hands will require a break at some point.

MR. BANIS: I do understand. We do have a scheduled break at 2:30, and that's what I'm trying to make, is the 2:30 break followed by the 2:45 public comment. Is that working okay?

THE REPORTER: That's works perfectly. Thank you very much.

MR. BANIS: Oh, good, good. Okay. With that, let's take items for the agenda for future meetings. What is on everybody's mind?

MR. BAGLEY: Randy, I hope we can get back to in-person meetings. It sounds like we are doing that. But I would just pass that along as a DAC member to the BLM staff. It's really important to us to have that opportunity.

MR. BANIS: Thank you. I entirely agree. Thanks for being the persistent voice on that too, Jim. I appreciate it, though. I appreciate it.

I expect -- should we have some conversation regarding monument planning? Is it timely, or is it still a little too soon? We will leave that into play. I don't know if we will be -- if we will have a subgroup meeting scheduled with much activity prior to our August meeting. I think our next meeting is --

MR. THOMPSON: Hey, Randy. Yeah, I think that is a good idea. I definitely think that, you know, given the timeline and the time that has passed since the monument's designation and some of the timelines that we have been told about, you know, preplanning and actual planning efforts, I think it is good to kind of keep that fresh in our minds just to make sure that we are, you know, staying in touch with the goals that are being set, because a lot of time has come gone by, and there's still a lot of work to be done. And it would be good to I think stay engaged there.

MR. BANIS: And I do recommend that DAC members try to brief themselves on this process. It's not that it is any odd or convoluted process, but it's just going to be a complicated process with some distinct sequencing. And I think the more that we know about it, it will help us with expectations.

Our next DAC meeting is scheduled for August 27th, Saturday, August 27th, and in person would give us the opportunity for our Friday the 26th field trip if we stick to our usual habits. And so that takes a -- I don't know. That is getting close as to whether I will be constituting a subgroup meeting prior to that, but we will see. Maybe some introductory Zoom meeting among the subgroup members we can facilitate prior to that. But monument planning would be -- thanks for seconding that, Jack.

MR. HOLLIDAY: Randy.

MR. BANIS: Please.

MR. HOLLIDAY: Is there someplace we can go and get caught up on what the planning process has done so far? I know you said you had had some meetings, and somebody said they would be having some copies of what went on in those meetings.

MR. BANIS: Yeah, that is the one.

That's the one.

MR. HOLLIDAY: Is that online someplace?

MR. BANIS: Yeah. Mike Ahrens reported that they are working on getting that link uploaded -- getting that content uploaded and posted, and we should have a link very shortly. So I would

just urge everybody to look for that link and take advantage of it at your best opportunity.

MR. HOLLIDAY: Well, beyond -- we don't have a lot of information there on the DAC webpage. So I mean is there a way that you can -- when that gets posted, you can let the DAC members know?

MR. BANIS: Yes. Well, that was Mike's plan, is as soon as it is --

MR. HOLLIDAY: Okay.

MR. BANIS: -- posted and available, we would be the ones to get the e-mail so that you can click on the link and you can watch the presentation. It is just a recording of one of the three presentations.

MR. HOLLIDAY: Okay. That's fine.

MR. BANIS: I think it was about -- they all went about two hours long.

MR. HOLLIDAY: Okay.

MR. BANIS: I would say the first hour and 30 minutes was pretty powerful. The last 30 minutes, however, will give you a really good idea of what issues are at the top of the mind of the public. And you can also hear from the public some confusion or not really understanding when or where certain specific issues will be decided on in the

process.

In other words, obviously, you're going to hear a lot of people saying they want the roads open. But the discussion on roads being opened is going to be way down the line, because there's so much program level planning that has to occur before they can look at things on activity level.

So, again, if there's something that you have a specific interest to look for in terms of planning and the monument, look at the sequencing so you can see when those endpoint points would be for you.

MR. HOLLIDAY: Is there a plan sequence to go through the different points?

MR. BANIS: Well, the PowerPoint goes through it very succinctly.

MR. HOLLIDAY: Okay. Very good.

MR. BANIS: You will enjoy it. I highly recommend it.

MR. HOLLIDAY: Yeah. No, I agree. I just want to get up to speed. I might have to go and sit there for you.

MR. BANIS: Floor is still open. Other ideas for future meetings?

Okay. Thank you. With that, let's

move into the next item on our agenda, and that is the election of chair. I'm expecting to turn the gavel over at the end of this meeting. Our choices are limited to those that are going to be proceeding forward and will be in office at the time of our next meeting, which is August 26/27. So a number of people who are here today aren't eligible for this.

If we -- three of -- there's seven DAC members who are eligible. Three are not present. That is Nathan Francis, Billy Mitchell, and Bob Robinson. They are still eligible but not present, so it would be hard to get concurrence as to whether or not they're interested. Those present and eligible, not to say that they are interested, but those present and eligible would be Jayne, Dick, Jack, and myself.

And so with that, I would start out first instead of seeking nominations, who among that group of four would wish to be chair for the next year to help the Desert Advisory Council out? Are there volunteers among those four, Jayne, Dick, Jack or myself?

MS. POWELL: I think we should volunteer you.

MR. BANIS: I am always happy to serve and willing to continue serving. I just want to

recognize that a year ago, we did talk at length about rotating fresh blood into the chairmanship, and I haven't forgot the conversation. And I'm happy to do so. But absent that, I would be happy to serve as well, and that would be up to the board.

MR. BAGLEY: Randy, you are here, so I think it is a good idea. But I also remember Billy Mitchell expressing some interest. And I'm sorry Billy is not participating today, but he has got some history, too. But part of being a chair is you've got to be here for the meetings, so ...

MR. HOLLIDAY: I agree. I think you do a good job, Randy. I think that probably another year, and then hopefully we will have another batch of people in by next year. There may be some people that are maybe more available.

MR. BAGLEY: My own personal feeling is I like to see a chair and vice chair rotate around. It's part of the institutional memory of the organization, and I think it is healthy for the organization to do it. But we don't have a full complement of members, and the DAC hasn't been functioning as normal for some time, which is unfortunate.

MR. TAYLOR: I would echo his

statements there that, one, I think, Randy, if you would be willing to, we would love to have you stay on for another year, just because we are not quite at the capacity that we need to be to function correctly. And I think it would help to have your expertise for at least one more year until we can get some -- get a full complement of DAC members to be able to make this work in a way that it should.

MS. POWELL: Institutional knowledge that you have is totally amazing. As a new member, I wouldn't even want to think about stepping into your shoes.

MR. BANIS: Thank you.

MR. THOMPSON: Yeah, I echo that, absolutely. Thanks a lot, Randy.

MR. HOLLIDAY: It will be important to have some in-person meetings so that we can have some direct communication with some of these people in order to know who to select.

MR. BANIS: Well, my --

UNIDENTIFIED SPEAKER: -- big part of it. That is such a big part of it.

MR. BANIS: My priority had been keeping the online meetings going and keeping the -- and getting our subgroups stood up. My next

priority will be getting us together in person. Okay? That will be my priority.

MS. POWELL: -- had said August meeting scheduled still for Palm Springs, assuming that we do have it. That was what was on my calendar.

MR. BANIS: That's -- the BLM generally takes care of the site. We can make suggestions. We can ask. It might be, you know, some unusual occurrence that might prevent a field office on a particular time of doing it. But if Palm Springs still looks like a good destination for August and there's no objections, Greg, if that's possible, should we stick on that calendar?

MR. MILLER: Well, we can, Randy. I just want to remind you of the field trips in August in the desert near Palm Springs, I know the temperature can get to 120 degrees, so we want to make sure that we choose a field trip that is going to be more suitable to human occupation rather than desert tortoise. But we can still shoot for Palm Springs. We can come up with some -- I'm sure we can get our creative minds together and find something that's very -- a little bit more -- a little cooler than sitting in Palm Springs in August.

MR. BAGLEY: On my calendar I have the

coast. Did that get changed at the last meeting? Did we change to Palm Springs in August?

MS. POWELL: Well, maybe I didn't write it down correctly. The coast sounds much better to me.

MR. BANIS: Oh, yeah. I think it's Palm Springs-Southcoast, and I think we thought maybe we were going to try to get over to the Coastal Monument, Jim.

MR. MILLER: That was one of the ideas, yes.

MR. BAGLEY: That would my recommendation for August. I would love to be back on the DAC, if that's what we are doing.

Randy, you were asking about future things. We have missed a lot of opportunities with these field trips and the meetings that we had scheduled, El Centro, Barstow. I really want the DAC to be in those places. And that field trip is such a key component to what we do, so we are actually on the ground seeing the things that we are talking about and inviting people to participate.

MR. BANIS: Agreed. Well, thank you. I'm happy to help. If there's any other questions or comments on items moving forward --

MR. MILLER: One thing, Randy, real quick.

MR. BANIS: Take it, Greg.

MR. MILLER: You know, so direction still from the Department and the Bureau is that no in-person meetings for the RACs and DACs until after October. However, like I said at the beginning of this call or the beginning of the meeting, I'm going to look to see if there is an exception and maybe -- to see if we can have that in-person meeting.

Honestly, my concern -- not my concern. You know, they are allowing us to do field trips, but to do a field trip to a location and then having a Zoom meeting after that just does not seem practical. I mean you would be sitting in your hotel room doing a Zoom call, and that doesn't seem practical. So I would definitely like to have an in-person field trip and then follow it with an in-person meeting. It might be an outdoor setting where we are sitting 6 feet apart around a big table.

But I just want to let you know that I will try, and I will look for it, but right now, like I said, the Department and the Bureau's directions is no in-person meetings until October.

MR. BANIS: Well, three months of

change. We are here today, and the things we are reading in the paper today, we didn't expect to read three months ago, did we?

MS. POWELL: I saw Riverside County's numbers went up again.

MR. BAGLEY: Every organization that I'm with right now has gone back to live meetings. And we do give people the option sometimes of a hybrid meeting, but the public engagement component is so important to what we do. And so, Greg, you can hear me. I'm really harping on this. But my recommendation as a DAC member to you through channels is to go back in. I'm a DAC member saying we want to meet in person. And the people who made those decisions about we are going to go till October, they need to hear that you have got DAC members saying we are ready to go.

And, obviously, if something really changed and the COVID crisis gets out of hand again, I'm fine with it. But we are in a different age, and we need to get back to this in-person opportunity. And you always have the option of declining if you don't feel safe being there.

MS. POWELL: Or wear a mask or both.

MR. MILLER: -- go ahead.

MR. BANIS: I was just going to say, we had our first Friends of Jawbone and Friends of El Mirage meetings just this month in person was our first since the pandemic, and we had a very, very good time. And for the El Mirage meeting, those who weren't there -- remember Dan? Those who weren't there were pretty jealous. I think we will have much better turnout next month despite them having to drive, because we had a lot of fun, those of us who were there.

MS. POWELL: We had our first Colorado River Regional Water Quality Control Board in-person meetings in April and May, and we had almost no public participation, so I don't know whether the public didn't want to come or they just -- they didn't Zoom in and they didn't show up. So we had the Board basically sitting in the room with ourselves.

MR. BANIS: Well, I think that picks up and starts to snowball again over time with the regularity. I think we will see -- we may see light attendance at our first as well, but I'm optimistic that over time our family will be back, our family of audience members will be back.

We have a pretty good turnout today, folks. Just to let folks know, we had about a dozen

members of the public earlier. We have nine still with us here now. We may have others joining us for public comments. So that is actually pretty good, Greg. I think that is one of the best public participations we have had for these online meetings. So even it is starting to snowball for us. More and more people are coming. But if we don't meet, the public won't come, so that's number one.

With that, I think what I would like to do if there is no objections, we will start public comment at 2:45. We are just going to break about nine minutes early here for a little bit longer break. That way, everybody wants to speak to the DAC will know that we are going to be here just as we said we would at 2:45 with ears open and ready to hear what the public has to say.

Is that okay with everybody?

MS. POWELL: Yes.

MR. BANIS: Jayne?

MS. POWELL: I had one question. Yes.

It is okay with me, but I had one thing before we break. On our agenda, it said discussion and vote. So does that mean we're supposed to vote now on electing you or what? Are we just kind of -- you know, everybody said yes kind of, and we go forward?

What is the process?

MR. BANIS: Tell you what. I would think the Bureau would appreciate a formal vote. Why don't we do that, because we do have a motion. The motion is on the --

MR. HOLLIDAY: I vote for Randy.

MR. BANIS: Oh, no. That was previous. I need a new motion. Right.

UNIDENTIFIED SPEAKER: Jayne, if you made a motion, I will second the motion. One of the protocols might also be to let public comment, and then we just come back and do the vote also in case they want to comment on this.

MR. BAGLEY: Right. I'm happy to do the second.

MS. POWELL: I move that we have Randy as our chairperson for the upcoming year.

MR. BANIS: Those in favor, aye.

MULTIPLE SPEAKERS: Aye.

MR. BANIS: Any opposed? No opposed? Thank you. Motion passes. Thanks, Jayne, for keeping us doing the housekeeping properly.

All righty. With that, folks, enjoy a little break. Restroom is down the hall, either to the right or the left. Come back, everybody, please,

for 2:45. It's going to be really wonderful. Thanks.

(Off the record.)

MR. BANIS: Let's see. I believe Kate, is Kate going to help me with this? Let's see. Greg, I believe you have access to be able to call on the public and see them with the hands up. And you have been helping us with the public comments in previous meetings, so if you would, let's go ahead and take our best part of the meeting, the public comments.

MR. MILLER: All right. Thanks, Randy. I do have access to that, and I will call upon those who have their hands raised to start with. And Miss Anitra Kass is our first person.

I think, Matt, are you the person who does that? Yes, okay. Good.

THE CONCIERGE TECH: Yep. Got it.

MR. MILLER: All right. Anitra, you are live.

MS. KASS: All right. Thank you very much. So for those that don't know, my name is Anitra Kass, and I am the Pacific Crest Trail Association's Southern California regional representative. And if you're not familiar, the Pacific Crest Trail or the Pacific Crest National Scenic Trail was designated such by an Act of Congress in 1968. And as its

designation, it makes it part of the National Landscape Conservation System for BLM. And so just wanted to give a quick informational update.

It is long-distance hiker season on the PCT for those headed north. We are actually coming to the tail end of it. Permits for a long hike on the PCT are issued March 1st through May 31st, so it's like a 92-day window headed north. And, as you may know, the PCT kind of goes back and forth between Bureau of Land Management lands, forest service lands, and state park lands, specifically in the first, like, hundred miles or so.

And so just wanted to give some kudos to the incredible collaboration between the Cleveland National Forest folks, the Regional Forest Service folks. Of course, PCTA is involved, but also Palm Springs and El Centro have been really engaged in providing public services and information and supporting leave no trace programs and all sorts of different programs going on in that southernmost hundred miles of the trail. So really just wanted to give some kudos to Dan Casank from Palm Springs and John Johnson from El Centro for that.

Also, wanted to say I just appreciate the update on the Sand to Snow Monument Management

Plan, so thanks for that. Knowing that, there's another management plan coming up, the Whitewater Comprehensive River Management Plan. I know it is baby steps on that, but just mentioning how much we would appreciate updates on that plan and that process as we move forward.

So just as we are making agenda items for the future, I would love to see that, and would also love to understand how the public portion of these meetings might work with in-person meetings. I've only been exposed to the online version of these, and so I'm curious how that might work.

Thank you very much. I know I talk fast. I think I got it all in.

MR. BANIS: Thanks. I don't mind answering the question. In our in-public meetings, we use a speaker cards, and we schedule public comment at various points along the agenda before votes. Also an opportunity to sometimes to interact with the BLM

Thanks. Next speaker.

MR. MILLER: Thank you, Anitra. We do not have any other hands up, Randy, at this time, so -- there we go, Lisbet -- no, Ruth Hidalgo. It keeps flipping back and forth.

Ruth, you are live, Ruth, as soon as

you want -- there you go. You're live, Ruth.

THE CONCIERGE TECH: Ruth, we are having a hard time hearing you.

MS. HIDALGO: Is that any better?

THE CONCIERGE TECH: It's still pretty quiet.

MS. HIDALGO: Okay. Maybe go to the next person, and I'll see if I can get my phone out of my case.

THE TECH CONCIERGE: Okay. Sounds good. Will do. Just raise your hand again after the next speaker. Okay?

MS. HIDALGO: Yes.

MR. MILLER: All right. Ruth has had some technical difficulties. We will go to her after the next speaker, and the next speaker is Lisbet Thoresen. Lisbet, you are live.

MS. THORESEN: Okay. You can hear me. Thanks so much for holding this meeting. It means a lot to the rockhounding community recreational users. Thank you for your time, your care, and your effort.

Also, very much welcomed and appreciated the meetings that occurred in April that were hosted by the BLM for the educational preplanning process for Mojave Trails. And it seems that we are

going to be now on a breakneck pace to get Mojave Trails to a final plan. And so I was really happy to see today that there is now a subgroup in place. I think you've kept some really excellent candidates, and I'm sure it's going to be a productive group.

One of the things that Colleen Whitaker [ph] and Jolene Sitik [ph], who were the moderators at that meeting back in April -- I participated in two of them -- she asked -- or they asked, "How do we reach out to your community? How do we communicate with you?" And I said, "Well, the DAC would be the best, the single best place, because we are used to the process, and that is what the DAC is for." And we hope that from now on that we will see the monument manager at every meeting and giving us some input and updates.

I understand that the subgroup will report to the DAC, which in turn reports to the BLM, but I think it is important, not only to talk about things and items and agenda, it is little bit about getting to know people to understand about values and what we care about.

There's a lot of institutional memory in our community that goes back 7- to 100 to 150 years of engagement with lands that now fall within Mojave

Trail. So we are very, very invested in how this process plays out.

And I have to say I'm really pleased to see that Randy has been elected to be the chair, especially at this moment after five really fraught years. Because it was COVID, and then before, you know, the DAC almost was, you know, suspended for a period of time. Then the DRECP Was going to be unwound. And now we have someone who really has deep connection to these planning products, if you will, and the travel management plan that are all going to have to be reconciled and somehow -- and deconflicted with a management plan that is still going to make people happy with all these disparate concerns and conflicting or competing stakeholders. So I really appreciate that.

What I would like to hear from the DAC, then, perhaps from Randy, is what is the best way for us to communicate to you? A lot of rockhounds are thinking they're going to have to do the whole thing all over again with roots and listing sites and all of that. And as you mentioned, this has already been laid out in these two completed products. So what is the best quality of information that you want from our community, and how do we submit that to the subgroup

to the DAC going forward? Thank you.

MR. BANIS: Thanks, Lisbet. If I were to have an ask, I think the best way the public can engage is knowing first that it is a long process and that decisions will be made at different steps along the line. And each of those decisions is going to incorporate specific questions. And it is important to know which question is being addressed at each time so that you can have the most influence on that particular question.

Questions that are too far down the road or that may have already passed, depending on when you are getting into the process, may not be timely and may not effectively affect the decision.

So the best thing to do is to, what I like to say, find the question in the question and answer that question the best that you can at the time -- in the comment periods and opportunities that are allotted. And that will include the subgroup process. Those will be public meetings, DAC meetings going forward, but, most importantly, the BLM's own deadlines with respect to scoping draft documents and other actions along the way.

Thanks. That was a good question.
Next speaker, please.

MR. MILLER: Randy, again, we don't have any other hands up.

Ruth, if you want to try to ask your question, please raise your hand. Okay. Ruth Hidalgo, and you are live.

MS. HIDALGO: Boy, I hate following Lisbet. She just is so eloquently spoken and pretty much covers most of the things that I --

THE CONCIERGE TECH: Ruth, Ruth. You are still pretty quiet, unfortunately.

MS. HIDALGO: -- any better?

THE TECH CONCIERGE: I'm wondering if maybe -- it's a little bit better. You want to give us a little bit more?

MS. HIDALGO: How's this?

MR. MILLER: Much better.

THE TECH CONCIERGE: We can hear you, yeah.

MS. HIDALGO: Okay. Following Lisbet is always -- I hate when I do that. I try to get my hand up first, because she is so eloquent. It's just a hard act to follow.

But I do want to thank the DAC for creating a subgroup for the Mojave Trails National Monument and for including rock and mineral collecting

in that -- as a category in that subgroup.

The overwhelming response from the public in both the 2016 vision sessions and the recent presentation was that rockhounds have serious concerns about losing our ability to continue our hobby within the Mojave Trail National Monument. So I think that is really important, and I appreciate you doing that.

I wanted to thank Ryan for engaging with rockhounds out in the Hauser Beds. While I wasn't able to attend, I heard that it was a very good time, very educational, because many of us had been out there and didn't know as much of the geology as they learned. And I'm glad to hear that he enjoyed it as well.

And, lastly, while I really enjoyed being able to get out with my granddaughter and watch her race at Glen Helen today and be at the DAC meeting and hear the presentations, I strongly feel that in-person meetings are the best way to engage the public. On the Zooms, I can't see other attendees. I can't necessarily always see who is talking, even when I swipe. In other meetings, I can see it. I don't know why in the DAC -- don't know how to do that. But I just want to reiterate that you have another vote for public meetings. In person. Thank you.

MR. MILLER: All right. Thank you, Ruth.

And there are no other hands up. Randy, should we give the public -- we can give the public a little bit more time to think about it and raise a hand, but --

MR. BANIS: That is good. Well, we couldn't ask for better public comment. You've got to admit, that is really one of the -- one of the best reasons for participating in the Desert Advisory Council meetings. It's an opportunity for us and an opportunity for the public.

So with that said, just to wrap up, I want to first acknowledge, it was a heck of an agenda. We heard from biological concerns. We heard about renewable energy concerns. We heard about advancements in technology and science with respect to storage and the challenges.

We had good news in the meetings, hearing, you know, the good news about the vole. The recovery of the vole is going very well. And, you know, I thought hearing about technology, at least for me, is always encouraging, to see how it is going to help.

We hit a very big benchmark today by

standing up a subgroup. We will work hard to get that subgroup now on its legs and have it running alongside of us. It will make us stronger. And we will keep the application period open for the Dumont Dunes and Imperial Sand Dunes subgroups. I made a note and won't forget to send the nomination roster so far for those two to all of you DAC members so you know which seats still need voices. But hopefully you can help round up some applications for us.

Also happy to continue to help with another year. I'm glad you felt the last year was productive, and I really like working with every single one of you very much, and that is evident by appointing so many of you to a subgroup, because I just -- I don't want to get rid of you. I really appreciate your willing to stay on board and continue to help us, and help us a strong and help us stay broad.

I have some quick firsts to acknowledge. Congratulations to Greg Miller. He hosted his first full Desert Advisory Council meeting. I think he did it like a pro. I'm not sure if the public knows that this was his first, but he did a great job. Thanks, Greg.

Kate Miyamoto has been filling in for

Michelle Van Der Linden in the public affairs office, and Kate is the one who really tied all the bows on the ribbons to get this meeting -- to make this meeting happen. So thank you, Kate, for -- this is your first DAC meeting in that capacity.

And also to Simone Knudsen, thank you for your help as the new stenographer. Hope to see you again at future meetings.

I'm sure we all want to thank the BLM staff who took the time to be here on a Saturday to help us and be available to answer our questions.

And I want to also do a shout-out to Matthew, the Zoom tech and the host. He does a great job getting everybody on the page and keeping the meeting flowing smoothly.

But my final thanks aside from my -- to my fellow DAC members, thank you, those whose terms are coming up. I hope your seats will stay warm and that you will have an opportunity to serve again and that we will serve together. Other DAC members, I will see you back on the screen in the regular capacity in August.

And the final and best thanks of all to the members of the general public who took probably one of the most beautiful days of springtime where you

could have been outdoors picking up rocks or something, and you chose to spend your time with us indoors today on this Zoom. Many, many thanks to you.

So with that, if there's no objections, let's call it a meeting. Let's call it over at 3:04 p.m. Meeting adjourned.

MR. MILLER: All right, Randy. Thank you very much. And I just want to say thanks to all the DAC members as well. And thanks for the acknowledgment, Randy. I appreciate that. I have been helping out with the DAC for, what, 14 years now, so it's not like it is new to me.

But definitely want to thank the public as well and all the individuals who helped out on the BLM side of things. You guys are a top-notch team for the BLM, and you continue to impress me from day one.

And, yes, without further ado and any other objections, meeting adjourned.

THE TECH CONCIERGE: Thanks, everybody. I will end the webinar now.

(Off the record.)

(Whereupon, the meeting concluded at 3:05 p.m.)

CERTIFICATE OF DEPOSITION OFFICER

I, SIMONE KNUDSEN, the officer before whom the foregoing proceedings were taken, do hereby certify that any witness(es) in the foregoing proceedings, prior to testifying, were duly sworn; that the proceedings were recorded by me and thereafter reduced to typewriting by a qualified transcriptionist; that said digital audio recording of said proceedings are a true and accurate record to the best of my knowledge, skills, and ability; that I am neither counsel for, related to, nor employed by any of the parties to the action in which this was taken; and, further, that I am not a relative or employee of any counsel or attorney employed by the parties hereto, nor financially or otherwise interested in the outcome of this action.

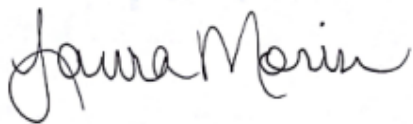
A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Simone Knudsen', with a stylized, flowing script.

SIMONE KNUDSEN

Notary Public in and for the
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I, LAURA MORIN, do hereby certify that this transcript was prepared from the digital audio recording of the foregoing proceeding, that said transcript is a true and accurate record of the proceedings to the best of my knowledge, skills, and ability; that I am neither counsel for, related to, nor employed by any of the parties to the action in which this was taken; and, further, that I am not a relative or employee of any counsel or attorney employed by the parties hereto, nor financially or otherwise interested in the outcome of this action.

A handwritten signature in cursive script that reads "Laura Morin". The signature is written in dark ink and is positioned above the typed name.

LAURA MORIN