

BLM California Desert Advisory Council
MEETING MINUTES
April 15, 2023 – In-person Meeting in Barstow, CA

For complete meeting discussion, please see meeting transcript

Desert Advisory Council Members: Randy Banis (Chairperson, virtual), Nathan Francis, Hans Haas, Jennifer Henning, Richard Holliday, William (Billy) Mitchell, Robert Robinson

BLM Attendees: Shelly Lynch, Greg Miller (virtual), Kate Miyamoto, Marc Stamer, Paul Gibbs, Tom Bickauskas, Dara Glass, Mike Ahrens, Michelle Van Der Linden, Art Basulto, Carrie Sahagun (virtual)

Guests: Matthew Gibbs (Zoom tech), Josh Candelalia, Debbie Gonzalez, Ruth Hidalgo, April Henson, Anthony Henson, Gregor Losson, Andrew Silva, James Lynn, Heather Sidens, Amber Lynn, Justin Morgan, Luke Basulto, Anitra Kass (virtual), Dower Jai Gervais (virtual), James Perez (virtual), Maricela Rosales (virtual), Joneane Neville (virtual), John Lindquist (virtual), Rose Winn (virtual), Janelle Williams (virtual), Jean Delucia (virtual), Hayden Bartz (virtual).

Opening and Introductions:

District Manager Shelly Lynch opened the meeting and welcomed everyone. Kate Miyamoto, CDD Public Affairs Specialist, went over Zoom, public comment period protocols and housekeeping for the meeting. Shelly introduced BLM employees and turned it over to Randy Banis, DAC Chairperson, to introduce Desert Advisory Council members. DAC members provided a brief update and introduction. Randy Banis presented information on the Mojave Trails National Monument subgroup status and four field tours.

First presentation: Barstow Field Office's Business Plan

- Barstow Field Manager Marc Stamer presented on the Barstow Field Office's business plan. Marc highlighted the large recreation areas in the field office including Razor Road, El Mirage, Stoddard Valley, Johnson Valley, and Dumont Dunes OHV areas and Afton Canyon, Owl Canyon and Sawtooth campgrounds.
- To charge fees at developed campgrounds per the Federal Lands Recreation Enhancement Act, it needs to meet five out of nine criteria for amenities, including tent or trailer spaces, picnic tables, drinking water, collection of fees by an employee or agent of the agency, reasonable visitor protection, refuse containers, toilet facilities and simple devices for containing a campfire.
- Marc went over the current recreation fees in the field office at El Mirage and Dumont Dunes OHV areas and Owl Canyon and Afton Canyon campgrounds.
- Marc discussed the proposed new fees at Sawtooth Campground which currently has no fees. The proposed fee is \$10 for camping and \$5 for day-use to help with the cost of maintenance and upkeep, popularity growth and to address overcrowding.
- Marc discussed increasing the fees to \$10 at Owl Canyon and Afton Canyon campgrounds which currently have fees of \$6 for camping. Marc discussed the changing fees at Dumont Dunes OHV Area to remove the non-holiday weekly and season pass to simplify the fees.

- Lastly, Marc went over some of the input on the proposed increase of fees from the field tour on Friday, April 14. Discussed impacts of recreation.gov as a tool.
- Questions? Marc received positive feedback on proposing to simplify passes for Dumont Dunes OHV Area. Full discussion and questions included in meeting transcript.
- Hans Haas added two things to report since there was extra time. First, appreciation for the rockhounds at the meeting, how they use the Barstow Field Office. Second, glad the BLM is not reviewing the DRECP in the western solar plan review, good news for recreation.

Morning break

Second presentation: Desert Discovery Center

- Barstow Field Manager Marc Stamer presented about the Desert Discovery Center, starting with its 2016 mission to build a visitor and education center focused on natural, cultural, and historic resources in the California Desert.
- Discussed the history of the DDC, served as the Barstow Field Office in the 1970s. Education programs served about 16K visitors per year in 2016.
- Desert Discovery Center is in the heart of Barstow, a hub on Route 66 highway.
- Discussed the future of the center, including geography, water, uses and how it should be interactive with seasonal messages for the public.
- Next steps include reopen, design workshops, update and develop an interpretive plan and have phased implementation. Partnerships will be a key component of the DDC.

Questions: Suggestion to include education on dark night sky at the DDC and partner with horticulture or garden group to revitalize the landscape in and around the Center. Full discussion and questions included in meeting transcript.

Lunch Break

District, Field Office, and Fire Overviews

- Shelly Lynch presented on the new leadership in the District (Marc as Barstow Field Manager), still working to hire Field Managers for El Centro and Ridgecrest. Discussed the Public Lands Rule released in late March. Informed DAC members of the news release and fact sheet and opportunity for public input ending June 20, 2023. There will be five information forums to discuss the Public Lands Rule.
- Field Managers from each of the five field offices reported on issues and projects. Full reports and discussion included in meeting transcript.

Public comment period – 1:45 p.m.

- Kate Miyamoto, CDD Public Affairs Specialist went over public comment period protocols. There were 10 in-person public comments and two virtual public comments.
- Debbie Gonzalez, on behalf of residents and landowners in Burns Canyon area, expressed concern and issue with off-highway vehicle traffic in the area. She requested the BLM roads in the Burns Canyon area be reassessed for highway licensed vehicles only as

OHVs are ending up on private land, wilderness and BLM-managed land; limit jeep groups limited to 15; and close Burns Canyon area from dusk to dawn for safety reasons.

- Margaret Hogarth, member of Searchers of Anaheim Gem and Mineral Society, talked about the upcoming gem and mineral show. Field trips are a major part of her club and invited the public to join. Expressed appreciation for rockhounding.
- Josh Candelalia, representing San Manuel Band of Mission Indians, looks forward to working with the DAC on implementing the Recreation and Public Purposes Tribal Parity Act, passed along a letter to BLM.
- Andrew Silva gave a comment on a mining project update.
- Ruth Hidalgo thanked the DAC for in-person meeting, importance of face-to-face. Expressed appreciation for rockhounding.
- James Lynn commented on the Desert Discovery Center's importance and to include special needs in future programs.
- Justin Morgan expressed appreciation for rockhounding and how important it is to him.
- Luke Basulto commented on the importance of the Desert Discovery Center and to be mindful of the local community and make it accessible for all and offered his assistance to bring partnerships to the Center.
- Gregor Losson commented on rockhounding in the Mojave Trails National Monument.
- Tony Henson gave a public comment and was thankful to attend the meeting.
- Anitra Kass from the Pacific Crest Trail Association appreciated the hybrid meeting and shared information about the Pacific Crest Trail.
- John Lindquist, a professional geologist in California, commented on rockhounding in the Mojave Trails National Monument and potential loss of access to sites.
- Full transcript of public comments available online.

Third presentation: King of Hammers event

- Dana Stephenson, Assistant Field Manager for Ridgecrest, presented on the King of the Hammers event in February 2023.
- King of Hammers is an off-road race combining racing and rock crawling. Presented on history and logistics of the race, and went over the numbers including spectators, visitors, competitors, staff, etc.
- Presented on BLM and partner's roles, the Special Recreation Permit process, and the five-year closure. The BLM had 20 monitors throughout the racecourse for safety. Full transcript available online.

Afternoon break

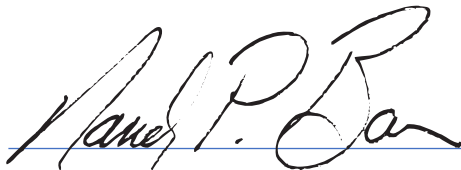
Discussion on Future Agenda Topics

- The DAC expressed interest in discussing a subgroup for Sand to Snow National Monument; hearing a presentation from a system operator on how they evaluate solar plants and learning the criteria for approving solar projects; update on Round Mountain, sheep grazing/ranching; and an update on the Mojave Trails National Monument planning process after public scoping.
- The DAC does not have quorum, so no official recommendations were made.

Wrap up and closing

- DAC Members elected Hans Haas as the new chairperson and Jennifer Henning as vice chairperson.
- Shelly reminded the DAC of the next meeting August 25, 26 in Ridgecrest and December 8, 9 in Palm Springs.
- Seven of the 10 remaining members are expiring in January 2024, and nominations are still pending. Hopeful to have nominations from 2022 approved soon. Meetings may be virtual or not be held if there are only three members. There will be more discussions if our nominations have not been approved by the end of the year on the future of DAC meetings.

Meeting adjourned at 3:30 p.m.

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Randy Banis", is written over a horizontal blue line.

Randy Banis, Chair
Desert Advisory Council