

The Bureau of Land Management Desert Advisory Committee Meeting

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Ridgecrest, CA

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>> SHELLY LYNCH: Welcome to August's DAC meeting. I can't believe it's the end of August already. Sorry I can't be there in person with folks. It's always good to see everybody. But we'll work it virtually today. So Michelle, if you could go through some protocol for the both in-person and Zoom meeting, that would be great.

>> MICHELLE VAN DER LINDEN: Good morning, everybody, I'm Michelle Van Der Linden, public affairs with the California Desert District office. This information is for our virtual members attending via Zoom as well as for everybody here in the room. So we have a public comment period scheduled for 1:45 this afternoon. Members of the public have the ability to address the DAC at that time about any items either agenda or non-agenda. There's comment cards in the back of the room for anybody here that would like to fill one out and just provide it to me between now and 1:45. To allow for the maximum number of individuals to express their viewpoints, we are only able to offer three minutes to each speaker today. If we have more time at the end of the comment period and you'd like to make a second comment, we will accommodate you if we have that time available. This meeting is being recorded and we have a captioner who is taking notes. And we ask that anybody in the room remember to state your name when speaking. That's all I have. Thank you, Shelly.

>> SHELLY LYNCH: Okay, yeah. And just ask folks in the room to speak up so that those of us online can hear, that would be helpful. So we'll start with introductions. First and foremost, I'm Shelly Lynch, and I'm the California Desert District manager. So we'll go around alphabetically starting with Mike.

>> Great. Yes, Mike Ahrens.

>> Okay, Tom.

>> Hi, everybody, [away from mic].

>> Paul.

>> Paul [away from mic].

>> Tim.

>> Tim Gilloon.

>> Greg.

>> I'm the deputy district manager for the desert district.

>> Julia.

>> Hi, I'm Julia, acting public affairs specialist. [away from mic].

>> Marc.

>> Marc Stamer [away from mic].

>> Marc, you're going to have to speak up. Michelle.

>> Michelle Van Der Linden.

>> And Jennifer.

>> Jennifer Whyte [away from mic].

>> Is there anybody that I missed?

>> I think we're good, Shelly. Shelly, are we ready to turn the meeting over to Randy at this time?

>> SHELLY LYNCH: Yeah, I'm sorry, you guys didn't hear me? I said I turned it over to Randy to introduce the DAC members.

>> Technology. Thank you.

>> Okay.

>> RANDY BANIS: I got the football. Thank you, everybody, for coming to our DAC meeting here in August. It's great to see everybody and see so many seats filled. And also welcome to the folks that are online and viewing this from the comfort of wherever you're viewing it from. Just reminding everybody to speak up clearly and well so we can hear. I'm Randy Banis, I'm a resident of Rio valley, California, just on the edge of the California desert conservation area. I represent the public at large and my current obsession as president of [away from mic] and president of [away from mic] it's a pleasure to work with the field managers with Ridgecrest and Barstow on those measures. Glad to be back and I would call our DAC members to introduce themselves. First, that's going to be Nathan. Good morning, Nathan.

>> NATHAN FRANCIS: Good morning, everyone. My name's Nathan Francis. I'm on the DAC committee, have been for some time now. I'm with the US [away from mic] and oversee some of their legacy land sites in the area.

>> RANDY BANIS: Next is our friend Hans Haas.

>> HANS HAAS: Good morning. I've been on the DAC coming up on one year now and I'm here to represent the recreational interests.

>> RANDY BANIS: Thank you. Hi.

>> JENNIFER HENNING: Good morning, I'm Jennifer Henning. I've been on the DAC for about a year now. I'm also representing [away from mic].

>> RANDY BANIS: And to my left, my old friend, Dick Holliday.

>> RICHARD HOLLIDAY: I'm Dick Holliday, I'm a recreation interest person, I've been on the DAC for two years here and well, probably my last meeting or second to last, depending on how things work out. [Laughter]

>> RANDY BANIS: And Paul, good morning.

>> PAUL MARTIN: Good morning. Paul Martin, [away from mic] manager, retired from mining engineer, last 20 years of my career was in California with some [away from mic] aggregates, rain mix. I'm very pleased to be here today looking forward to our discussions and a special thanks to all of the BLM field managers for their excellent summary reports and to the BLM according to DAC permitted. Thank you.

>> RANDY BANIS: I'd like to introduce my colleague Bob.

>> ROBERT ROBINSON: Bob Robinson. This is my second term on the DAC. I represent the interests of fires and protecting cultural resources. I'm a travel chair, also the tribal conservation officer.

>> RANDY BANIS: Thank you. Do we have any DAC members attending virtually today?

>> We do not.

>> RANDY BANIS: Very good. I'd like to just take a second and recognize some members of the audience that are with the public land roundtable of Ridgecrest. Just raise your hand if you've been to those meetings to be a part of the team. It's really great to see you here this morning. Dick and I had the privilege of joining the roundtable on Thursday night for their monthly meeting and it was a terrific discussion. Good to see the bodies fill the room and it's really great to be back. The roundtable has been a great part of the Desert Advisory Council since I can remember, since my very first days. And the public lands roundtable is well known for members too because of the advisory council, and some of our most memorable desert advisory members have come from the public lands roundtable. I'm really glad to see that group here representing as strongly as they are today. So welcome. Thank you. With that, I am going to move -- any other DAC members want to make a comment or report on anything before we get started with the presentations? With that, I'm going to point my finger at Tom Bickauskas who is going to help us with the presentation on the Eastern Slope Mitigation Durability Agreement.

>> Good morning. So it's actually Eastern Slope Mitigation Durability Agreement.

>> If you could drag those a little bit on the screen. Should we start with the cover slide?

>> That would be easier.

>> There it is. Is there a map on that?

>> Let me see what I can do. Give me a sec.

>> TOM BICKAUSKAS: Okay. So what you see on the screen there is the area that I'm going to talk about in reference to that 215,000-acres that was relinquished a few years ago. Next slide. So the purpose of the Durability Agreement, and I'll mention I'll get to [away from mic], but you know, the Durability Agreement allows for habitat restoration and rehabilitation. Project will be done on BLM land. And it will be done meeting the State biological requirements [garbled audio]. So the project will be

implemented on BLM's areas of critical environmental concern and also co-located on California desert national conservation lands. So DRCP, our latest management plan. So this is one of the ways that we're hoping to make progress meeting those goals. So basically, this Durability Agreement is between DFW and BLM. It's a two-party agreement. It's derived from the sites act, however, I said that because through -- I don't know that it's necessarily relevant here, the issue is that the agreement itself is consistent with the BRACP. And the agreement has specific provisions who will do what, right? That's the -- that's the Memorandum of Understanding. That's what the agreement is. That's its form, that's its shape. That's important to add for us because these last beyond the manager who's in place now to give us the stability and, you know, they have the MOUs in place. And unless they're needed to be updated, things carry on as managers [away from mic] gives us that stability. And I'll get to a little bit about the agreed [away from mic] Next slide.

So these acres is basically an off-site mitigation area for five solar farms. And [garbled audio] so they could get an incidental pay permit for Desert Tortoise. And also Mojave ground squirrel I think you're familiar with those two species. And this is applying money to CDFW, and in turn, CDFW will have proposed projects that will be on there, we will find places for them to be where we agreed this project shall take place on. In a nutshell, that's how this project is. We have a funding partner in the government, and then we're bringing projects to. So some of the primary activities are rehab and restoration accessing but now closed routes. We call them unauthorized linear disturbances or incursions. I'll show you a graphic of what will look like at the time of designation. With the help of partners, there are a few less lines on that half that we put [garbled audio]. I want to say that we are [garbled audio]. Next slide.

So where and how will funds be used? The side board [garbled audio] between the CDFW and we had envisioned meetings with the CDFW to talk about how to lay out the projects. So because it's relatively new, two years ago before the Durability Agreement came about, we're -- we [garbled audio] plan or work with CDFW. And you could bring in our national foundation for wildlife, if needed, to handle funding. We haven't really gotten to that point. But one of the important things here is that BLM will maintain the authority on where the projects are done. So CDFW presents the projects that they want to get done, and then we will help find the right place. So the [garbled audio] and I think this is a tiny [away from mic] observation of leasing. This is a leasing where we're in charge of where projects will go. We do have an agreement, an MOU for CDFW. So it's an agreement, but the MOU itself doesn't -- the CDFW will bring that funding that accrues and, you know, there are things that are needed, whether it's seeds or whatever is required do that restoration project, they'll bring that. And [garbled audio]. I've been talking about who funds the mitigation work. I mentioned five solar farms. And the CDFW and the BLM. The third party is Avantus, these are the names of the plants that are planned. Eland, Kudu, and others. They produce their own explanation of why they're engaged with us. So I have a video that will explain [garbled audio].

>> Matthew will roll the video here in about two and a what minutes.

>> Stand by.

>> We have to wait for public comment period for questions.

>> Exactly.

>> VIDEO: It's about seven San Francisco's all stacked together. In traditional mitigation, you have small checkerboarded parcels where it's very, very hard to find something as large as onyx and that's all contiguous. Large and connected areas are really important to wildlife because there aren't other things that could harm them from one nice conservatory property to another. It's a nice benefit to wildlife and plants. We're able to partner with Bureau of Land Management, and the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service to deliver a conservation project that had never been done before.

What's great about this project is it's delivering clean renewable energy via solar power projects, but it's preserving plant and wild species on a big scale. There are 20 species found on the onyx conservation project. These include the Desert Tortoise Mojave ground squirrel as well as California condors, Joshua trees, a lot of species we want to see thrive in the desert. We've also created an endowment so that we can fund additional projects that will benefit native plants and wildlife species and we're looking to invest millions of dollars on this property to make sure that it continues to support the species that we're trying to conserve.

These public-private partnerships make conservation possible on a scale we didn't dream of before. Onyx is on the scale of our ambitions and portfolio, and my hope is that projects like onyx can serve as a roadmap and we can apply this model into other ecosystems where we're trying to deploy renewable energy.

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>>TOM BICKAUSKAS: I wanted to show that video because that will help explain why they're engaged with BLM and CDFW. We look forward to a long time of consistent funding and [garbled audio] so we can still have [garbled audio] that improve the quality of land. Can I have the next slide.

>> Maybe.

>> TOM BICKAUSKAS: All right. The type of things that were funded by this, ground treatments, mulching for horizontal and vertical. Laying things down, so linear [garbled audio] or digging small holes and taking [garbled audio] that then help the seed when the wind blows, help it look more natural. So the ground [garbled audio] the selective use of barriers, adding signage, people will know where to go. We kind of fill it in with signs of course, because people can be sign blind, you know what I mean. And then seeding and planting. So basically the whole cocktail are used for solutions to do restoration.

Other activities that are mentioned, there's installation and maintenance of tortoise fence along roads. That's been one of the things that has been difficult to get funded. Installation and maintenance of informational kiosks. We do that by adding manpower to [garbled audio] and then enhancement of seeps, springs, and streams and placement of box culverts because grazing has been better entailed in this area and some improvements. [Garbled audio] and improve the springs themselves and [garbled audio].

The continued treatment of invasive plants, because every time the wind blows, seeds go everywhere, right? And you know how the wind blows here, so it's important that we continue to push back on that encroachment of invasive plants. Having a partner is really helpful. And the same thing for surveys and monitoring, that's the metrics. So we [garbled audio] because how do you know if you've arrived, right, if you don't ever have any goals. Next slide.

All right. So here's the guide that I alluded to in my story about, you know travel. So the black lines on there are the [garbled audio] and so, you know, our partner [garbled audio] get off the routes, willingly or unwillingly. The laugh vendor areas, we have a few open you can see that recreation is affected, how they're working around it and we're trying to improve the habitat all across this allotment, which happens to be overlaid by two areas of high concern and conservation lands. Those are defined in the [garbled audio]. I didn't put those overlaid because you all [garbled audio] I have people to help you, actually.

So some stats here. We've got the number of those sites, 2,300. Each those could be their own project. 1,140 miles of unauthorized linear disturbances. Those are the ones we're trying to erase. And then these things need selective barriers and signage and continuous education, engineering and education and enforcement is the way that [garbled audio] is the physical things. Implication is that [garbled audio] personal self to, you know, to do something different. You know. And then in terms of enforcement, we know what that is but it is the most expensive and the least long lasting. So we use those things and the restoration is in the [garbled audio] we hope by doing that we reinforce the designated route system and make it more accurate and it's easier to use because it's less confusing, you're not seeing all these little random routes go off of main routes so you understand where the routes are. So there's -- there could be some backups too, not just to the environment, but also to the users that use the area.

And vegetative improvements, we have a spring out there that has [?]. I've never seen it before. But it's associated with a spring. We want to be sensitive to these things, but we need to deal with it so it doesn't spread. [Garbled audio] the project like this Durability Agreement will provide that [garbled audio] and money do it.

And restoration of ecological function. What I've come to stand there are researchers who are setting the metrics, how do we know when we achieve the ecological function, right? Because you hear a lot about [garbled audio] what have we done and when can we take that line off of the chart, so to speak, and call it achieved, right? So a couple of things that I've become familiar with is that the researchers are what we're looking for, they're [garbled audio] building their colonies in and around the routes are the desert [garbled audio] do we have the animal restoring their natural paths? Hopefully this will become the norm as we try to do the restoration, but we're also [garbled audio] restoration seemed good and are certain things better than others, right? We always want to do constant improvement. I know you guys are all members of DAC here, you've been around [?] time and the same issues come up. That's why I wanted to point out the restoration of ecological function, because the researchers [garbled audio]. Next slide.

An example of what it looks like to erase the route. This was a project that was presented on restoration eight years ago. So that rock in the back is Roberts route. [Garbled audio] in the area. And this will be the ultimate goal, right? We just erase the route and regardless of your opinion of route designation and our management of routes, we have made those decisions and now it's time to implement those plans. We want to do it in the best way that we can so that we are recovering the Desert Tortoise and also the [garbled audio] there are others out there that come to mind. They may [garbled audio] the area's so big, you know, like the high areas, the mountain range running through the area, that's how big the area -- you can often look, we have the [garbled audio] to show you a digital

map of how big the area is, where the owls are, places you might be already familiar with that are within the area. Around the [garbled area] live in the area.

>> I live there now, yeah.

>> TOM BICKAUSKAS: Next slide. So you saw the hole. That's the elephant. How do you eat an elephant? One bite at a time. And so we already have an existing restoration plan that is probably 15 years old. And that's what we have our restoration interns work on projects for. And one of the divisions that I have as we continue down that path, if we find a reason to change it, might be able to.

These little polygons on this map represent polygons that we have worked. So we can get a polygon such as Roberts route, CDFW has interest in that. And it's an area we've actually fenced in to protect it from the [garbled audio]. So this particular arrangement is a way that we could so to speak. And it's like we would have to do more to – maybe do some [garbled audio] programmatic plan and [garbled audio] there are bigger things, you know, to consider that. But we're happy to do some [garbled audio] the point is that we already have some planning in place and adding the JB Durability Agreement to it is another tool in our tool belt and [garbled audio]. So with that, next slide. Happy to entertain any questions on the agreement, work, methods, benefits? Other locales.

>> DICK HOLLIDAY: More of an understanding on how things are quantified. So I saw that there's 2,300 unauthorized linear disturbances, an area that used to have a grazing tortoise, right? So in a grazing permit, it's my understanding that the ranchers running the cattle are allowed to use vehicles when that passed. So was there any way to return them before the end of the services that they owned by the action of grazing [garbled audio] that were there before the permit? Because all of those unauthorized when, in fact, the use of vehicles was authorized in that area seems like a little bit of a misnomer. I understand that even when a grant -- or ranching is permitted in a wilderness area, they can drive their vehicles through hills in an area that's specifically no vehicles allowed. So it's not a case of no vehicle access and wilderness areas, except when there is, right?

>> TOM BICKAUSKAS: Yep. So the ranch system in this area usually goes to permits, and that's been the backbone of the route system. And so I wanted to [garbled audio] but what I have observed is a lot of them and [garbled audio] when it was contracted out, [garbled audio]. As we moved to the designated route system, we had to make those hard choices. Everything that's left that is a route is just. Unauthorized.

>> DICK HOLLIDAY: It would just be unauthorized in that way. I'm not trying to throw anybody under the bus on who made the route, but the backbone of this route system was what served the ranchers. And now the big question is what do we do with the range improvements that are out there? Some of them are pretty big things and [garbled audio] then they become a habitat for wildlife. And it's a lot more water, taking water from some spring somewhere or, you know, wherever the water comes from, right. And it's probably a lot more water that's [garbled audio] so that's-- that's in my mind, you know, as important now as -- because we have water, those [garbled audio] wildlife.

>> ROBERT ROBINSON: One of the things I wanted to mention is a lot of that property belongs to the state parks in that area. Working with state parks. And they're wanting to do a lot of things you're doing. Is there any kind of communication between you two? Because a lot of those blue line areas are, you know, underneath the blue line areas, even on federal land there's state jurisdiction for fish and

wildlife. And they're wanting to put in some control systems off of vehicles to keep them out of the riparian areas and the spring areas. And we were talking about rehabilitating some of those systems for cattle and make them for compatible for wildlife. And deer won't drink out of water troughs, they drink out of the ground if it spills out on the ground. If you watch deer they will never drink out of a water trough. And there's a in that area. That's just one example. And birds and things, they like to get stuff from the ground. So it's not a big thing to take away the water trough and allow that to run. And you know, you may want to put it on concrete to help keep it cleaner, I don't know. And then the other thing was, he was talking about the ranchers out there. They use that—butterbredt spring road and they used the main roads and parked their horse trailers and then used horses. That's how they controlled their cattle.

>> TOM BICKAUSKAS: The road our talking about the one that was near bird springs pass?

>> Yeah, I think it's still private, right?

>> TOM BICKAUSKAS: I'm not sure about the landowner, but we have talked about that.

>> There's a lot of [garbled audio].

>> TOM BICKAUSKAS: There's an equestrian also in there –

>> Bird springs is much more to the north.

>> TOM BICKAUSKAS: Sounds like we need take a ride.

>> ROBERT ROBINSON: Yeah, that's right at the edge of the mountain and goes over. You're talk about the invasive weeds. The fish and wildlife, we had a grant for five years and then a three-year grant to RC&D to treat invasive weeds all through the Kernville area. We had to go back year after year and that persistence paid off. A lot of those things we were treating really hard to treat, we pretty much eradicated them on the properties. And the now you see something he spot sprays it. But we were able to eliminate that 95% tore 98%.

>> TOM BICKAUSKAS: That's where we want to get to.

>> It's not that information, but they have all the information on restricted herbicide dollars -- herbicides, it works different than the old poisons. They don't poison wildlife or anything.

>> TOM BICKAUSKAS: And this is RC&D?

>> ROBERT ROBINSON: I think it's kind of -- it's here in Ridgecrest but I think it's kind of slowed down now. But that was -- I was the water shed coordinator for 15 years under grants and one of the things we did was get eradicating -- we eradicated all the tamarisk and Russian thistle and tamarisk off the onyx ranch itself which now belongs to Rosedale over in onyx. We cleaned all that up. And then some ranches over in walker basin and Kernville.

>> TOM BICKAUSKAS: We are ramping up our capability to do [garbled audio].

>> ROBERT ROBINSON: It would both be persistence and having the right things for the right plants. And fish and wildlife, if you let them know that you're working on blue line areas and that comes into their jurisdiction, they'll help you.

>> TOM BICKAUSKAS: Right. And so the thing about that [garbled audio] and then our plan and environmental [garbled audio] needs to cover that and where. So we have an existing plan for weeds -- weeds, to eliminate them. But we're planning a more broad [garbled audio]. Combined with having five people in my office, you know, with a weed applicator -- weed sprayers, spraying qualified, I guess, [garbled audio], we're really open to increase this part of our land here. Because between eliminating, you know, the scars of old routes and getting rid of weeds, I think that's two of the fastest ways that with can [garbled audio].

>> Yeah, because these invasives, they crowd out the willows and the cotton woods.

>> TOM BICKAUSKAS: Right. So let's talk about what you've been working with.

>> You eliminate -- you go back and plant something back, something else will come.

>> TOM BICKAUSKAS: Yeah. Right.

>> PAUL MARTIN: Is the funding for this project [away from mic] renewable energy companies would it be open to other businesses such as mining or other use of the land? Can they become a part of this as well where they can get this mitigation from the [away from mic] or only for [garbled audio].

>> TOM BICKAUSKAS: The Durability Agreement is based on the one funding source.

[Multiple conversations].

>> And request you help me out there.

>> TOM BICKAUSKAS: So while we can definitely make arrangements and agreements with other entities, other [garbled audio] as long as we go through those arrangements [garbled audio] how the process is to be mined from them to [garbled audio] so we've used those to help us [garbled audio] we have in California. And [garbled audio]

>> It would be nice to open it up to other businesses.

>> As long as [garbled audio].

>> Thank you.

>> RANDY BANIS: Any questions? I'd like to tee off on what Bob said about the state lands. Those state parcels are managed where the priorities were [background noise] those state parks are also the onyx ranch state vehicle recreation area. And so bringing that-- those parcels in with a higher level of focus on OHV use, I'm wondering how that affects your agreements.

>> TOM BICKAUSKAS: Right. So CDFW is [away from mic] of the state [away from mic]. So I'm aware that there is no comprehensive plan at this time for onyx. Right. And so I'm not sure what we'll be able to do on their property, because they [away from mic] have to work with onyx ranch, I think. It's never come up when we've talked about that. But now we've got this stuff out, what would you do on the [garbled audio] makes sense do it across land, the circle incorporates lots of different parcels. I don't have the answer for that. Back up as a part of intensive planning for that, we'll bring it up and kind of [garbled audio] if they choose a designated route. [Away from mic] whatever that commonality is there between the [away from mic].

>> This other nonfederal land in the area, particularly the springs in the area are not on federal lands. And for doing restoration that involve the springs and persistent improvement their functioning, will you be drawing in those partners, the landowners for those springs?

>> TOM BICKAUSKAS: If BLM doesn't directly, CDFW could. We haven't gone that far down the road yet to figure that out. It makes sense to do so. Absolutely.

>> RANDY BANIS: Also, WEMO 2019 is not fully implemented in that subregion yet. And I would strongly recommend we get into that before much of these projects under the Durability Agreement get started so that the route network has an opportunity to be -- create its input on the users maps, the users where they like to travel. So I would think this would help elevate that importance of the WEMO there.

>> TOM BICKAUSKAS: I agree.

>> RANDY BANIS: What's the timeline that you see for the first boots on the ground project under the agreement?

>> TOM BICKAUSKAS: It's been about two years since the Durability Agreement was signed. I have not heard. I think it's the -- this is the long game, you know what I mean? I don't know if, you know, you have a restoration program that he that we did with grants, I have envisioned something similar with crews are brought in, they're doing similar things that we're already doing. So I don't -- I don't want it to be a big shock to the system, so to speak, you know. They're doing the things that they're doing, but doing a little bit more of it.

>> RANDY BANIS: One last thing is there are-- have been articles referenced by members of the press when discussing the conservation leasing proposed rule for conservation leasing. Some of the press has been calling this sort of a pilot project of that. But you took --you took [garbled audio] from that conservation leasing. Do you have-- can you expand on that just a little bit? Because the DAC didn't really -- I don't think we've really received a good presentation on that conservation leasing proposed rule that unfortunately [away from mic] on it. But it certainly felt like to many members of the public community that -- that that rule change could be more significant than more than the words on the paper reflect. So the reason I made the distinction is because leasing is what it is. And here we have an agreement and [away from mic] so that's why I made that distinction. Do you have any other insight?

>> TOM BICKAUSKAS: All I can say is that right now that rule change is still in public review and going through the process so we don't really -- we don't really try to [garbled audio] one of the things that are implementable at the time. So we're working with the Durability Agreement that that folds into the leasing process when it comes -- actually happens. Then that would be the part that we would kind of fold in [garbled audio].

>> RANDY BANIS: Maybe the press didn't get it absolutely correct, which is just so unusual.

>> Right?

>> RANDY BANIS: My last question, thank you for bearing with me and all the DAC members. What vehicles will there be for public input on some of the projects that might occur on those lands? What would be the searching points for the public to participate?

>> TOM BICKAUSKAS: That's a very good question. You know with the programs that we already do, we work with programmatic plans [garbled audio] my vision for annual work is to make that visible on like an annual basis for people so those who want to know about it can find out, what are we planning this year. And it goes all through the same communication with the trials, that you know, regular communication with them on the programmatic activities will [garbled audio] it was programmatic and broad and they wanted to work very specifically. And I know they have indicated to us that they might know more about our annual work. What are you guys working on this year? We know what area you want to work, but, you know, do you have a project? Yeah, I can't think of the name of the spring right now, but you're aware of it. But the point is, I think we can – I think we can do public notification, maybe even, you know, [garbled audio] a meeting, these are things that I think we can use our programmatic and do an annual information. So if you have any other suggestions, I'm all ears.

>> RANDY BANIS: [Garbled audio] awesome. Thank you. Thanks very much, I appreciate it. Any other -- any other questions on that from the staff?

>> Just one thing. Some of the springs, like that frog and up the gold hill and stuff, I think they've been purchased by --from onyx by Mojave land trust. And they would be probably amenable to doing some improvements in those areas. So that's somebody.

>> [Garbled audio] Mojave land trust, what their intentions are. All right. Thank you.

>> RANDY BANIS: Well next time we bring a video, can you bring popcorn? Thank you. We're about 15 minutes early for our morning break. What sage advice does the bureau have for us in proceeding? I don't know if it's enough time to bite into the next topic, probably –

>> How about we take a break if that works?

>> Should we stick to the 15 minutes? I think that's a great idea. So I show. Let's be back at 10:10 at the latest. Thank you.

[Break]

>> RANDY BANIS: All right, folks, let's grab our seats and move on to the next show. Thanks, everybody, for hustling back in time for us to begin. And I want to now turn the floor over to Alex from the Wild Horse and Burro Program, Karen Sanders as well is here and with no further ado.

>> Can I have one minute?

>> Jump right in.

>> Can I get the speaker?

>> Just give me one second, I have to [away from mic]. There will we go.

>> Yeah, we need to go to the CAWP slide. Yeah. We can start there and I'll just –

>> I think that's where you want to start, right?

>> Yes.

>> Thank you.

>> ALEX NEIBERGS: All right. Good morning, everybody. I'm Alex Neibergs with the Bureau of Land Management Ridgecrest field office. I'd like to thank you everybody for allowing me and Karen to present today. I've been with the program for close to 30 years out of the Ridgecrest field office assisting the California Desert District field offices on their Wild Horse and Burro Program management. I'll let Karen stand up to introduce herself.

>> KAREN SANDERS: Good morning, I'm Karen Sanders, I'm the administrative assistant at the wild horse and burro corrals. And I will have been here for one year. He has a lot more to say, but I have my fair share also.

>> ALEX NEIBERGS: Thank you, Karen. Today's presentation I'm going to be reviewing for the national Wild Horse and Burro Program and then review the California Desert District field offices Wild Horse and Burro Program and feign mainly emphasizing the Ridgecrest field office area. So with the program, the bureau has developed a comprehensive animal health and welfare program. It's called the CAWP. This is reflective of how committed the Bureau of Land Management is to the protection of animal welfare and which provides for humane care and treatment to all wild horses and burros that are protected under the wild free horses act. They established procedures which the BLM and the contractors must follow in the -- all the handling of the animals in the program. It's a program-wide comprehensive, as you can see, applies to all management activities within the Wild Horse and Burro Program. The requirements that is by policy for the BLM and the contractors to follow, we are certified through training that when we do these activities, that we are qualified to implement the CAWP. Next.

So the expenditures for the fiscal year 2023 was right around \$153 million. The breakdown on the expenditures for fiscal year 2022 was 138.5 million, and the pie chart kind of shows where the majority of that funding goes to, for holding costs for unadopted animals. This is for 14 preparation facilities, 15 maintenance facilities. The maintenance facilities are where animals have been prepped and are being held to be placed into adoption someplace within the United States. And then we have 40 long-term pastures with 15 for gelding and 25 for mares. There's about a 30,000 capacity holding ability for those long-term holding, and unfortunately we're right at close to 40,000. The BLM is in the process of trying to pull together extra long-term holding facilities to accommodate the anticipated removals that they're planning on doing within the next ten years. The other pie chart we have for adoptions and sales, gatherers and fertility, program support, and presently there's a small percentage of the funding goes to our monitoring compliance. So with that, next slide.

We look at what the challenges are throughout the program. Basically you see a total of 349 herd areas. Of those, it was designated through land use planning that 177 would be managed for either wild horses and/or burros and only 25 are at AML. Next.

As you see on this chart, the estimated horse population is 68,000, closer to 70,000. And the estimated burro population is about 40,000 on BLM lands currently. That is totally and when considering the appropriate management levels that are assigned to the HMAs, the excess wild horse burro numbers on the very bottom reflects right about 56,000. Next.

To address this, this is a chart reflecting the gatherers and removals throughout 2000, and you can see for removals, the population on the left spiked. And right around 2012 is when we also tried to apply the PCP for fertility control to try to reduce population growth. Next.

So in regards for the program to address the wild horse and burro population control efforts, we're focusing on gathering and removing excess animals, the use of -- do this, we're looking at use of helicopter assisted gathers along with. We will adhere to the CAWP and then apply for fertility control, we're looking at utilizing these removal efforts to also include fertility control. Next.

With fertility control, we have at the initial what we were looking at doing in 2012 when it was approved by the EPA. We had special training in Billings, Montana, with the science center there in regards to the application of the fertility control. As you can see, the methodology with utilizing dart guns is you have to get up close to the animals to effectively inject them with the fertility control. Next.

This is the PZP. This here is what is --you can see it's not a good antigen by itself, so it needs an adjuvant added to it. This first injection, the adjuvant is called the modified complete Freund's adjuvant. And this takes about 100 times to get it mixed in well together and then for the booster shots, you would just use the PZP with the incomplete Freund's adjuvant. It would last for about a year and then they would have to be boosted again to allow for another year of fertility control. This was very labor intensive to try to maintain the population at levels that we were trying to maintain. Next.

The -- then there was a development of PZP-22, which is a time-released capsule, three capsules are basically placed in the hind quarters of the horse for time release. It's one, three, and 12 months time release. But the initial shot, as you can maybe see in the individual holding that shot, it still requires that initial vaccine shot with the complete Freund's adjuvant. And this didn't really seem to produce the results that the BLM was hoping. More animals wasn't -- there was a lot more animals treated that wasn't -- that were still giving babies. Why it wasn't working very well is still kind of being assessed. Next slide.

So through research, the next alternative the BLM is selecting to utilize is GonaCon which induces antibodies against its own Gonadotropin hormone-releasing hormone in females. This gives 50% of Casey is and after second injection has about 100% fertility control. Next slide.

This reflects from what I was just showing with the -- with the jab stick where you have to inject the pellets down to a syringe and needle that will give you efficacy for about 40 to five years. That is what the bureau is hoping to do is get these animals down to AML for you to apply the effective work for fertility control, the herd has to be close to AML. And then they're hoping that with utilizing GonaCon they can get on a schedule for HHA with a five-year. Next slide.

This is their hopes is that they will bring down with the helicopter assist gathers, bring in the animals, apply the fertility control, remove the selected removal animals in and selected mares that would be returned back out on to the range and that's what we're hoping to do to help bring down the population growth. And for us to get back down to the national AML of 23,900 -- or about 29,000 animals. Next slide.

Here is the California desert area in the south and Northern California in the north. The north has 14 HMAs. I've identified on this slide eight HMA's because the piper mountain HMA is a horse and burro HMA. That's why there's an eight there. You'll see with the next slide how --next slide -- the -- where we are with the numbers. We're seeing about in Northern California in excess animals about 2,000 down to the California Desert District there's 3,000, with a total right around 5,100 animals that the State of California is needing to address. California state management is looking to implement a ten-

year plan for all aspects of the program, and that is just now starting in its development stages. Next slide.

This year is more related to the California Desert District. Back in 2023, we had identified 2022 herd areas, aging herd management areas that was identified in the California desert conservation area plan. Then the 1994 California desert protection act was passed. It affected 11 herd areas. We had others, California desert plan amendments to -- which changed the status of ten HMAs to herd areas. So at present -- it's confusing with the eight and the seven, this is including the piper mountain herd management area, so there's seven herd management areas identifying two horse HMAs, four burro HMAs, and one horse and burro HMA. So at the bottom you kind of see where we're at in the district. It is right now we have an AML of 197 horses and excess of 590. And with burros we have an AML of 337 with an excess of 2,000,477. Next.

Here's a little more specific breakdown with the field offices. Having an excess animals of 579 horses. That was due to our co-management with the center that carried the majority of the horse herd. But we do operate within the -- the memorandum of agreement for joint management. The Barstow has 11 horses out of herd management area, that is in somewhat of a situation where it needs to be addressed also. El Centro, they are at 936 burros in excess and -- excess and Needles at 719 in excess. This is where we have the piper mountain HA and HMA, the sand spring last chance HA, and Waucoba hunter mountain. We don't have any burros up there on Lee flat, except when it's created pockets to what were -- where they are on BLM lands. But for the majority, they're on the park. So we are challenged with addressing herd management areas that have relatively few animals. Or no animals. Next.

Here is -- right here you see where China Lake carries most of the centennial herd area and the slate range herd area. We have the panamint herd area adjacent adjoining to the park and you see the wilderness in the green. But the complexity of management. Next.

In 2021 fiscal year, we completed a centennial and slate range herd area wild horse and burro plan. It was appealed and IBLA issued an order granting BLM's motion to dismiss based on lack of standing. So we continued with the operations to remove. Next.

And here we have population survey that was done on the centennial HMA. The counts were directly -- we got 521 burros and 480 horses. Next.

This serves as a visual of a gather that was occurring that we removed burros from the China Lake Navy air weapon center. As you can see, that's with trap placement, you want to hide the trap the best you can. We don't have pictures of burros coming into the trap because photo points wasn't advantageous for people that would be interfering with the trap itself. Next.

These are the burros which were removed. They are, as you can see, we have a full area here where we do have the comprehensive animal welfare plan addressing foals and how they are to be shipped. Next.

And again, with sorting the animals, we -- you can see the snow fencing that is placed on the panels to create a visual barrier to help load the animals on to the trailers. Next.

And within the trailers, we have to allow space for the animals to move. And so that there are space requirements for, one, removing animals to be transported to the facility. Next. Here's another gather occurring on the base. This is showing the helicopter pushing the animals into the trap site. Next.

And next. This is just visual for you to review.

You can see the horse being led. These horses key in on the prouder horse that's trying to go into the trap. Next.

And the horses go into the trap and they are caught. Next.

And this just a configuration of the trap. Next.

This is just showing, again, how important it is for the jute to be set up to create an alleyway to the trap. Next.

And this is just another gather that occurred in last year in May, 2022. Next.

And this is -- that was part of the same gather in Panamint where we were removing them from the park and bringing them in to -- next -- the trap. And again, just a configuration of how the trap is set. Next.

And then we have the slate range herd area that we have an estimated population of 472. The Navy weapons center is in the process of trying to establish and clear trap sites so we can start addressing those burros. And the north end you can see that they are pushing populations between the park, the BLM, and the Navy. Next.

And these are bait traps that we also utilize. You can see the bait that we use. Next.

And the configuration of the trap itself. Next.

And this is an end result. This was at the mountain herd area where we were doing an emergency removal last year of burros that was necessitated by a spring drain. Next.

And now we're in the process of doing a removal down south where burros getting out on the alfalfa fields and we're addressing it under 4720 under our federal regulations removal of strayed animals from private lands. So these animals -- next -- will be making the travel out to our Ridgecrest regional wild horse and burro holding and adoption facility. Next.

And be prepped, placed, and held to their next appointment which is conducted by an administrator.

>> KAREN SANDERS: Whoops, I dropped all my papers on the floor. I got it. So, yeah, on the adoption, Karen Sanders, I have been with the Bureau of Land Management for just a year in October, and it's been a whirlwind. If I could have the next slide, please. And the next one.

So at the Ridgecrest Regional Wild Horse and Burro Corrals, our job is to not only gather the horses and burros and take care of them, but to get them adopted out. The staff at the corrals, we take the job seriously. We have our -- our head guy, Grant, he's not here today, and then we have Alex who is the horse specialist. We have a head wrangler and two wranglers and then myself. And we just want to give the animals the best care that we possibly can, and also the best service to the public. Next.

The facility is open to the public generally Tuesday through Friday from 8:00 to noon. However, if you're interested in visiting the corrals, you're welcome to come any day of the week, rain or shine, and drive the perimeter of the facility. I suggest that you bring carrots, binoculars, camera, pen and paper so they can jot down any questions that they have, and just enjoy the animals. The burros are most especially proud to come to the fence to visit with you. And we have a lot of feedback from our adopters who say that they're Burrows are easily domesticated. I think it's because people come out very frequently to feed them. We have some friendly ones and of course they're burros so they can act like jackasses. We have a contract crew that comes in to feed the animals every day around sunrise. We have contractors who perform hoof trimming on an as-needed basis. I could have the next slide.

And we have contract veterinarians who come in to provide care, specialized care for the horses and burros. The horses and burros all get immunizations and the mares get gelded and if there's any specialty care that they require, our contract veterinarian takes care of that. Alex tells me that the man on the left is the state veterinarian.

>> [Away from mic].

>> I don't remember his name.

>> Al King.

>> And then the photo on the right is drawing blood for Coggins. That's a test that horses have to have in the State of California before they can be transported out of the facility. Next.

So as of the week of August the 4th, the State of California had gathered 2,182 horses and burros. We were able to provide fertility treatment to only 276, but we had 6,333 private placements. They come to us from various locations throughout California, as you saw in Alex's presentation. But they also come from other states in the Western United States. Many times it's because of planned activities, sometimes they're brought in because of nuisance situation where they get in rollaways, they invade neighbors, trespass agricultural fields. Anyway, as you can see from the picture, these are nys from Nevada and I always like to say they're waiting for instructions for offloading. When we open the gate, we have to prod them to get out of the trailer because they don't want to move. Next.

So once the animals arrive at the facility, they are separated by age and gender. Mares and Jennys or foals are kept -- are kept together until the foals wean. And as I said before, all the males are gelded. We don't let any fully functioning males out of the facility whether it's through adoption, transfer, purchase, whatever. Every animal is marked with an eight-digit freeze mark that represents a U.S. Government registration. Estimated year of birth, and their neck tag number. And I think Randy adopted a burro and he still remembers that burro's neck tag number, because it's very important that you have that neck tag number when you call and ask us about a particular horse or burro or when you come to the facility. I've had folks come out to look at the horses and burros and then they'll come in and say I want that one that's a paint or a Dunn or whatever. I'm like, I've got to have the number. We don't name the animals at all, which I think the public finds a little strange. But with over 500 horses and burros, how could we and how could we keep them all straight? Each horse and burro gets a microchip that is applied to the Withers, and they're all dewormed and they get their primary vaccinations. They get that initial immunization and after a waiting period of generally three to four weeks they get a booster shot. Next slide.

This is a chart that shows the alpha angle code. This is a code that is used by the Bureau of Land Management and also by the Forest Service. And each angle on that picture has a number assigned to it. So two marks is a one that are vertical. If it's horizontal it's a zero. And then it just goes on around like a clock to give the horse a brand. And that freeze brand causes the hair on the left side of their neck under that freeze brand area to turn white. It doesn't hurt them and that's how we're able to brand the horses and the burros so that we can tell which ones they are. And the next.

Some of the adoption requirements for a horse or a burro, you have to be at least 18. The animal has to stay in the United States until it's titled, and that eligibility usually occurs on the one-year anniversary. Actually it's 365 days plus one, so after 366 days the horse can be titled -- the horse or burro can be titled. There's a compliance inspection that has to be performed either by a horse professional such as a veterinarian, trainer, extension agent, BLM, authorized BLM agent who can go in and do the compliance check so the horse can be titled. An applicant can have no convictions of any inhumane treatment of animals and they can't have violated the wild and free roaming horses acts. The applicant must show they can provide adequate facilities, access to feed, water, and shelter. Approval is not based on fence height of the pasture, but the height of the enclosed area. So we don't less horses and burros go if a person can't show that they have the appropriate enclosed area. It has to be at least 400 square feet. If you adopt a burro it has to be 4.5 foot tall panels. If you adopt a wild horse over the age of 18 months, it has to be six-foot panels. I don't care how much acreage you have, it doesn't take make a difference because that's not addressed in the regulations. Also the applicant has to provide appropriate trailer configurations. You have to have a full backdoor, has to be covered, no -- nothing inside the trailer that would cause the horse or burro to get caught up in it. Next one.

Different people like to adopt and some people prefer to purchase. So whatever works best for the individual is what we try to offer. And there's differences between the two. If a horse or burro is offered for adoption three times, it's counted as three strikes and, and that's not a bad thing, it just means that that horse or burro has been offered at an adoption event which can be a satellite event or can be an event that occurs at our facility. After that time, then that horse or burro becomes sale authority. An adoption is \$125, which seems pretty cheap, but think about what you have to do to take care of a horse or burro. But if you're going to buy one and you buy it from the facility and come pick it up at the facility, that purchase price is \$25. Which that's, you know, outrageously a small amount of money to pay for a horse or a burro. But that's just what it is. Next slide.

So the purchase requirements, of course, are not as stringent as the ones for adopting. We don't have to know your corral configuration. We don't have to know your panel height. None of that. But if you come to pick up the horse or the burro and you don't have the right kind of trailer, we're not going to let you take it. That's just a given. That's one of the things that we can do as the folks at the corrals is make sure that that horse is going to be transported properly. And the buyer also just has to provide humane care and has to say that they will not knowingly sell or transfer ownership to any person or organization that intends to resell it, trade it, or give it away for slaughter or processing into commercial products. Next slide.

We do satellite adoption events, and this is the group of us who are at Castaic. We work with the Los Angeles sheriff's department at what used to be their honor farm, and we're hoping to partner with them so that they can have an inmate training program at that honor farm. But that's a long process and we're just not there yet. It was a successful adoption, and we had a good time. Next slide.

Some of our program partners that I mentioned, well, I mentioned with Castaic and the Los Angeles sheriff's department, they provide programs for their inmates. One of the main ones in California is the R3C program at elk grove, and this provides an opportunity for the inmates to learn live skills. It helps the reduction in recidivism for the inmates, and it also includes -- it also makes the horses more adoptable. If you get a saddle-trained or just a halter-broke horse, it's easier to work with than just a wild one. And they are wild. So this is a good program all the way around. The program impacts horse -- horse programs like mounted police units, the military, border patrol, California Department of Fish and Wildlife, and there's even an R3C trained Mustang that patrols at Yosemite. So it's kind of a wide-reaching program. And the next adoption at the R3C facility will be in October. Next slide.

We have another one in the United States at Cannon City, Colorado. It was the focus of a documentary called the wild horse redemption, maybe you've seen, maybe you haven't, but I suggest that you watch it. The program design and implementation was actually approved by Temple Grandin, that's a name that should be familiar. She's a Colorado State University professor and she's an outspoken animal advocate. This program is known for its training program where the incarcerated workers learn how to tame or saddle train a wild horse and they use horse whisperer training methods. Next slide.

Currently at the Ridgecrest facility we have 211 freeze marked burros and 252 freeze marked horses. We in early July we received 76 wild horses from the Reveille gather in Nevada, and in late July, early August, we got 16 wild horses and 114 burros from the Johnnie gather. We hosted visitors to the corral. We hosted the kindergarten through second grade. There were 63 of the students, their teachers and chaperones, and then later in the month of April the Hinckley rollicking ranchers 4 H club paid us a visit. And every one of those children wanted to take home a horse or burro. We had a good time. Everybody brought carrots and we just took a walk around the facility and it's always good to have children. We have a fiberglass burro inside our lobby, and when the annual current elementary students came in, one little girl, she must have been in the second grade said, oh, my gosh, it's a glass donkey. But anyway, you've got to come see us so you can see our donkey. Next slide. So if you want to learn more, we have websites and email addresses listed on the screen. We always send people to wild horses online.BLM.gov to make their adoption application. That's the best way to do it. And of course you're always free to call us at the facility to make an appointment if you want to come any of those times between Tuesday and Friday from 8:00 to noon. And then of course you can come to the facility anytime. Next slide.

Does the DAC have any questions? No questions? All right.

>> RANDY BANIS: I have no question. It's just that [background noise]. During our last DAC meeting and it's fabulous. I really recommend going out with children and parents.

>> Yeah. Yeah. Thank you.

>> DICK HOLLIDAY: I have a question. [Away from mic].

>> ALEX NEIBERGS: It's ten years, that's what the national program is trying to implement a ten-year plan to get it down to AML. They've solicited from all the states the current AML, the excess numbers --

>> DICK HOLLIDAY: What's the AML?

>> ALEX NEIBERGS: The appropriate management level that has been identified in the land use plans that wild horses and/or burros can utilize within a herd or management area. If it's identified as a herd management area within the herd area, then there's not only the AML that is set, but the monitoring data there's a Dole versus Clark decision in 1984 that a bureau cannot arbitrarily set an AML. They have to support the law. The law identifies [background noise] and that is what the Dole versus Clark emphasis was that AML you have to manage where it's part of a natural ecological balance within the parameters. But as you can see, we have a drought. We have excessive surge possibly with rain. So that brings a dramatic storm when things start drying out. So, and the advocacy groups do challenge every aspect of our program when it comes to gathers. There's a Senator in Nevada that is trying to limit the use of helicopters. And helicopters is the really most efficient means of being able to herd animals to be able to be removed and to provide fertility control.

>> DICK HOLLIDAY: [Away from mic] we ran into a couple of herds [away from mic].

>> ALEX NEIBERGS: I don't know if that was on public lands or on Indian reservation.

>> DICK HOLLIDAY: I don't know. We're looking at this problem across the country. It's not only a BLM problem, it's a Forest Service problem, it's an Indian reservation problem. If you were to add up all the horses that are in peril, it's a pretty large figure. Well, the [away from mic] more money on wild horses and burros than they do on recreation, if you look at their budget. I mean, for recreation, it's just - it's pretty ridiculous when you look at the hundreds of millions of dollars you're spending and it's, you know, you're going to solve that problem in ten years on BLM land. But all these things are coming in from other parts of the land too. You know, I -

>> ALEX NEIBERGS: It's a big challenge.

>> DICK HOLLIDAY: Yeah, it's a big challenge. I mean, I go through and look at the BLM budget, we got things we can't do in recreation spending millions of dollars on wild horses and burro and we're living in a humane society, but we're going to be overwhelmed with all these things. Down where I live down by us, Colton, there's burros getting hit by the car all the time on the highway.

>> ALEX NEIBERGS: And again, that is stray burros. They belong to the state. That's not -

>> DICK HOLLIDAY: We have stray burro and private burros and BLM burros.

>> ALEX NEIBERGS: Yeah. I feel your pain.

>> DICK HOLLIDAY: I just can't see that we're going to resolve this problem even a BLM land. I appreciate what you're doing.

>> ALEX NEIBERGS: Well thank you.

>> RANDY BANIS: So the burros don't just show up on the lands naturally, it's a problem that humans created and, you know, there are fine lines of descendants of the people that put them to work and use them in mining and industry and when the horse and buggy age was over and motorized vehicles came into play, the burros were let go to roam free. You know, they're not - life on the range is hard. It's not -- I know it's really pretty and fun and nice to see wild burros out there when you're recreating or traveling. But they don't always have an easy life. Terrain is harsh during drought years. Food is scarce. Water is scarce. They need a lot of food. They need a lot of water. There are dangers out

there. The terrain is rocky and difficult on their little legs. And -- and when they find themselves with no other option but to stay at that one watering hole because they just don't have anywhere else to go and watching those watering holes dry up more and more every day, it's -- it's sad to hear that. And then you also have the people who think it's fun to shoot burros in mass amounts and leave them there.

>> ALEX NEIBERGS: Yeah.

>> RANDY BANIS: And so it's harsh. It's very difficult life that they could have. When you see the life on the -- in the corral and you can see the staff, you can feel the staff taking their care and so very seriously their passion and love for the animals that they're caring for is at the highest level. You definitely feel that. And you know, I never had a horse or any equine animal. I purchased a property that had horse infrastructure and just after a while we look at half of your land is taken up by something that you're not using and you feel that, gees, I could really provide a good home. And so I don't know what it was, but -- you know what it was actually?

It was going out to the corral with some carrots and driving around and having one touch your heart. They're always very anxious to come and get their carrots. But when the carrots are done, see ya, they're back in the middle of the crowd again. And we fed the little one, these little 9879. [Laughter] -- they came and ate buckles. Buckles, yeah, sure, she enjoyed the carrots, but well, you at rest moved away from the fence when the carrots were gone, buckles stayed right with us and loved to be around us and loved to have his head --her head scratched. And we just fell in love with this little--this little creature.

And she's brought a lot of joy into our lives. It's a lot of work. About every ten days or so, four bales of hay. Actually Bermudagrass. But it brings a lot of life to our property and it's really fun just looking out the window sometimes and just seeing what they're up to and you just want to go down and say hi. And they just spend time with them. Sometimes just put the chairs out and hang out, have our nightly -- have our nightly cocktail while watching the burros. They love to be brushed.

We went from zero to three in one day because, you know, when it rains it pours. There were two -- there were two older burros in our -- in our community that had been together for -- that I think probably the better of ten or 15 years. And they came as a pair. They were inseparable. And we also knew that just having one little burro, they're a heard animal. They want to be together with some of their own. And so in one day we literally picked up two down in Afton and drove up to Ridgecrest to pick up another one. They all learned this was our home now and they had to figure things fraught Day 1.

The process was really when you go through the process and the application, you can see that they do care who are taking those animals home. They want to know that you're thinking about these things and thinking about sheltering a facility or thinking about what it is that you're going to feed them. Can't just give them M&Ms and hot dogs, it doesn't work that way. And -- and you want to know that you've already called out and you've got somebody that you're going to call when the time comes.

We had the first visit from the fairer just a couple weeks ago, that was a new experience for them. The remarkable -- they have a remarkable [background noise] again, I've got to be somewhere, then I stop in to feed them, they sense that you're in a hurry and they sense that this is -- that you can just feel it and they're just, what, what, what? When you go from there bristly and you say hi, girls, they just -- it's a whole different attitude from them. They pick it up from you and they're sort of like emotion

magnets in some way. And they also know when something's up. You know. You show them to your friends, oh, they're so happy to -- to play with your friends. But when you show off with a vet or a fairer, they're no different than your friends, but they just know. It's like, okay, what's going on? What are you guys going to do to me?

If I really learned -- I like to think they maybe learned from us but I've learned an awful lot about them. In some ways I've learned more things about myself. And so the experience of adopting the burros is one of the neatest things I've ever done and I'm really happy to have them there. And I want to thank the wild horses and burro staff for working with me on it and guiding me through the process. I went through the process just like everyone else does. And -- and stuck with it and we got our little buckles and if you ever come to the house, if we need carrots, we'll send you down to the corral and you can introduce yourself to him and maybe you can give him a little bit of a brush. Just thank you very much for that.

>> Thank you. You should bring them to the next meeting. [Laughter]. I think Robert had a question if we have time.

>> ROBERT ROBINSON: I just want to mention up until they were allowing the ranchers to manage the horses, and Navy used to reduce the number of donkeys and [away from mic] they got the number down to where they didn't know [away from mic] and they took all the horses and broke them for livestock and they had criminal [away from mic] market studs out. And they managed them for a long time. And they were excited to live with them there. But when that management stopped, the numbers increased. And they lost out. [Away from mic] they put them out but they've had no [away from mic]. They're a different animal and when the numbers are great, they eliminate any competition. So the [away from mic] are the ones subject to that. They don't have any [away from mic].

>> ALEX NEIBERGS: I understand and especially with the range -- with the fires they've had and then also with the drought and that's why we did that emergency removal was the animal condition scores were getting down below too.

>> ROBERT ROBINSON: They were bad there for three years. But for western on that berm area, seeing those donkeys in a -- a lot of them down on the Panama side and I don't think [away from mic] it's pretty much [away from mic] down in there it's just not [away from mic].

>> ALEX NEIBERGS: Yes, it is very rugged. One of the very big challenges on removing burros out of that country.

>> Those animals seem to stay out there. And there's a lot of them.

>> ALEX NEIBERGS: We'll be -- you know Cindy Hopkins?

>> Yeah.

>> ALEX NEIBERGS: From the Navy base. We are hoping to address a gather sometime. We had an event scheduled for this October, but one of the challenges with the Navy base is that they prioritize testing versus gathers. So we are always in -- in a situation where we plan things, but it gets changed.

>> ROBERT ROBINSON: The way the directives is, they have all those spring [away from mic] animals come in at night and they [away from mic] that's how they have them.

>> Was this on base or?

>> Both [away from mic].

>> Okay, yeah.

>> 1940s and '50s.

>> Yeah.

>> ROBERT ROBINSON: They were managing the horse up until the '50s and early '60s, and then the Navy stopped it. [Away from mic].

>> ALEX NEIBERGS: I think it was more for the use of motorized vehicles, also the 1971 free roaming wild horse act initially prohibited the use of moat rides vehicles for removal efforts. The 1976 policy act redress and identified that would be a management tool for the USDA and Department of Interior to utilize.

>> I think a combination of those things is no more grazing and no more managing [away from mic].

>> ALEX NEIBERGS: It is unfortunate. If we can address these issues with the Navy, with their commander, I think it would be prioritizing it.

>> You got this –

>> Yes. That's another issue. Yes. No easy answers.

>> No. I see it's [away from mic] where we are now.

>> Thanks, Bob. Other questions? Thank you.

>> Thanks.

>> Appreciate it very much. [Applause]

>> RANDY BANIS: We have -- we're just a few minutes before our lunch break. I'd like to take a minute and thank the BLM Ridgecrest team, Tom and his team, for not just hosting this meeting, but for the great field trip that we had yesterday. Going on to the base and looking at a geothermal power plant is really something very rare that people get to do. And I feel privileged to be able to have done that yesterday and see some very different lands, there's a landscape physical features that there you just see nowhere else. Absolutely amazing place.

And the fire station and seeing the team there and how much -- how many places they have to go and how far away sometimes their range is and what kind of cooperation they provide with the other agencies to be able to -- to be able to address the fires that are on the lands. It was great working with them.

And of course the stop at Fossil Falls was particularly neat for me. I stop there regularly, it's a regular stop for me on 395. A lot of people are sort of in a hurry to get to Mammoth or get to the high country and they don't stop in to Fossil Falls, even though it's right there off 395. Or when they're coming the other way they're sort of in a hurry to get back home. But for me, it's a great place to stop

and it's an easy walk out to the -- to the falls. But this was the first time I've ever seen water in the falls because normally Fossil Falls is just a fossil of water falls that once existed. And to see the water there again was really neat. And you know, the sound of running water, trickling water in the desert, it's really a great sound. And I really enjoyed that a lot. I'm sure thankful for all the members who went on the tour, I'm sure they'll agree with my assessment and thank you for having done that.

>> [Away from mic].

>> RANDY BANIS: And live fairy shrimp, yes, they were. That's really neat. And one other just little point is DAC member Jack Thompson couldn't make it to our meeting in person, and he's even strained to join us online. You know, we had the big rains recently and no one knew where it was going to hit the worst. But we all know now where it did, and that being the Palm Springs area, the Coachella valley area. And Jack is in preserve area, white water preserve which is another area that the DAC visits from time to time. Everything got washed out up there, the road's gone. He and his family had to flee and are working hard to -- to relocate and find -- and address their displacement. They're just looking forward to some sort of normalcy coming back into their life. And so my heart goes out to Jack and his family and for all the folks and maybe there are others in our BLM family that also suffered impacts from that -- from that big storm. I want to acknowledge that and acknowledge our fellow DAC member that he gets a pass, undoubtedly gets a pass today.

He did send a question for me to ask later on on his behalf, and I'm happy to do that. With that, stretching that out, we're just in time for our lunch break. We'll resume back here at 12:30. We want to start on time because we have some time certain presentations that we want to make. So folks, let's go grab an early bite and enjoy the break and I'll see you back here at 12:30 after lunch. Thank you, everybody. Thanks, everybody in the audience for being here.

[Lunch break}

>> We are back.

>> SHELLY LYNCH: Okay. Want to welcome everybody back. We'll get started in the district and field office and fire overviews. So I'll start. I'll go over a few highlights from the state director's report. Get the right document here.

Since our last meeting, one of the statewide priorities is OHV recreation. I know that we just got -- I don't know the details, but someone from the field office, maybe they could talk to a little little bit in terms of what they got for the OHV grants. Again, a large portion, about 64% of the funds requested by BLM California is for the California Desert District El Centro, Barstow, all our field offices. And as folks know, we use those funds for everything from law enforcement to restoration to signing a variety of activities that we use those state grants for. Touch base a little bit on the infrastructure.

Since last year, June, BLM California has obligated more than \$15 million toward ecosystem restoration projects. More than a million to clean up orphaned well areas, and more than 8 million for forest treatments with the overarching goals of ecological restoration. Additionally, more than \$900,000 has been extended to develop native plant materials needed to restore native vegetation on public lands managed by the BLM and the Mojave Desert eco regions and portions of California, Nevada, Utah, and Arizona.

Also since last year, BLM California's received about 10.2 million in infrastructure funding for fuels reduction projects. For fiscal year '24, BLM California is projected to receive an additional 6 million in fuels infrastructure funding. We're also supporting other infrastructure projects important to California, including the middle mile broadband initiative to expand broadband access across the state. The Thurston northern railway station at the ports of Los Angeles and Long Beach. And the Brightline between Los Angeles and Las Vegas.

For renewable energy projects, the BLM is in the process of reviewing multiple parcels nominated for geothermal leasing in El Centro and anticipates starting a NEPA analysis in the coming weeks. We recently approved solar projects within the DRCP currently under construction and slated for completion by the end of 2023. Hoping to generate close to 1,000 megawatts in Riverside County. Additionally, the BLM has 7 projects, five solar, one wind and one geothermal under construction. We have Crimson, desert quartzite, Mesa wind and Ora Mesa.

Under wildfire and fuels, the BLM signed a decision on the statewide wild land interface fuels treatment programmatic and Environmental Assessment to streamline fuels treatment on up to 930 acres of BLM managed land that are within and adjacent to the wild land you are been faced categories categorized as high or very high risk. So that was a several-year effort by the state office to finally get that completed and over the finish line. So that was a huge effort that we completed.

Let's see, on the national conservation lands, I'm sure Michael gave an update on the national monument planning, the initial public scoping period ended July 5th and we're reviewing those comments. Mike could speak a little bit more to that. We're in initial kind of scoping or pre-scoping maybe stages of Sand to Snow National Monument planned development as we're still waiting for funding to really launch that planning effort.

Let's see. Oh, and then Randy, you mentioned the public -- excuse me, the public rule earlier. The BLM hosted five information forums to discuss the details of the rule and the public comment period closed on July 5th. So I suspect that headquarters is going through those comments and if folks want more information, they can go to the website which is www.regulations.gov. And I think that was it for the state report.

Couple other things. So the DAC report went out in advance and is available online. We want to welcome Jennifer Whyte, she introduced herself in the beginning as the acting El Centro field manager. She started in July, and Jennifer, when we get around to the El Centro field office, maybe you could kind of give folks a little bit of an idea of where you came from and that sort of thing. As far as DAC updates in terms of members, there was an a nomination period for new DAC members. That closed, I believe, last week and we received several application packages that we'll be reviewing. The five nominations we put in before have gone through the -- they've been vetted but still have to go through the confirmation stage and so they're still working through the process. We're hoping to have those soon. That will be an additional five new members. And then I think there's seven positions on the DAC that are going to expire the end of this year, so it's a revolving door on [video froze].

>> Shelly, if you can hear us, you froze. Shoot. Technology, we love it till it stops working. Shelly, you froze there for a second, looks like we have you back.

>> Okay. I did want to mention an update on the DRECP program agreement. You guys still hear me?

>> We can hear you.

>> SHELLY LYNCH: I'm getting warning messages. The appendage G of the programmatic agreement was for cumulative effects. And we have a final draft that's out to the committee for review. So hopefully later on this year we'll have a final draft of that appendage G. And just to remind folks, appendix F is for the cultural sensitivity analysis and we're also going to be doing a landscape study. This appendage G, the first effort is for the mitigation fee for cumulative effects. That's really all I had. Greg, did you have anything that I missed or to add?

>> [Background noise] thanks.

>> Are there any questions from the DAC members before we move to the field office – field offices?

>> No questions, Shelly.

>> Okay. Well, let's start with Needles. Mike, you want to go first?

>> Sure.

>> If you wouldn't mind grabbing the microphone and put it on the podium so the people at home can hear you a little better.

>> MIKE AHRENS: Okay, there we go. All right. Thank you for this opportunity. Did submit a field office report for you all and as Michelle said, it's available on the web. I'm going to highlight on the MLA reassignment portion of the report. I talked about and I wrote that report. We had just initiated a comment period and that's since closed. We did receive quite a few comments on it and I guess what I really wanted to highlight was that that project is about the reassignment of an existing right of way to a new pipeline owner. It's simply that administrative function of saying, oh, you bought the pipeline, here's the right of way, here's the terms and conditions that that pipeline is managed under. And as all of you probably are aware, Cadiz has over the last 20 years suggested an opportunity for water project that they'd like to explore. That's not included in this. And really in any way we don't have an application on that, we're not considering that, and so little confusion with all the comments focused on that water project and pros and cons about that project. So I just wanted to clarify that what we're talking about in there really is just strictly the administrative function of changing the ownership of that pipe and assigning those existing rights over to that owner as opposed to really expanding any rights or changing anything or anything like that.

Let's see here. So as far as -- oh, Shelly asked us to talk about Olancha. We did okay. We're going to get our law enforcement and education grant, it's probably a total of about 200,000 between the two. I don't have the numbers with me. We did not manage to get our ground operations funded. It scored like it typically does, but I think the funding level is a little less so tended up below that line. That's going to make operations a bit of a challenge next year and we're going to have to see how to make the best of that.

So I was asked to report on some tremendous work that the DAC subgroup for the Mojave trails -- Mojave trails national monument has done. I'm happy to give an overview on that. As we refer to it, Monument Advisory Committee or MAC has been meeting several times last year over the fall and then this last spring we actually held four field trips where we went out and got on the ground and looked at those resource objects and values within the -- within the monument. We saw was it 27 of 33, I think, that were identified actually seen them with our eyes, talked about the pros, cons, challenges were with those things. So it was a really good opportunity for the whole MAC do that.

And then over the last few months, Randy and the chair of that group put together a series of questions that would kind of entice the members of the MAC to help express their thoughts on different aspects of the plan that we're trying to address in different ways. And eight questions generated 42 different responses. And they were good -- a good range of questions there, and I'll run from essentially changes in ACEC, recreation managers, specific about the needs to protect or how we might specifically manage the resource objects and values, little bit about travel management, kind of that interface, that balance between resource objects and values, protection and management and then recreation and how that interface works. I had a request about filming, and then corridor management for utility corridors. Good broad range of questions there. That generated 42 responses.

And then they circled back and to the -- to the MAC with an ask after kind of making [away from mic] those comments into a more concise list, circled back to the MAC to give them a ranking strongly agree to strongly disagree. And then use that as a matrix to really find where there's consensus about the MAC, about the direction to go, given those different things. And so that's been provided to all the DAC members. I hope you saw the email the other day, probably is on the web or will be soon. And like I said, the [away from mic] provided a list, this is kind of the top 12 topics where there was the most consensus. So that's really, really helpful and I think could be helpful if the DAC chose to provide comment to the planning team. We certainly embrace that and might be a good starting point there for that. And so good piece of work, really ends up a lot of work, it's really pretty concise and easy read and found that common ground at least there. So thank you for that.

And then on the Mojave trails itself, we have been through the public scoping phase of that. Received several hundred comments and we're putting together now into a comment report and scoping report and still -- still putting that together even as we speak. And then we have also -- we did finally get through the planning contracting and so we have some folks on board to help with us the heavy lift on that. They'll be doing the final scoping report right here soon, and then helping us with the planning itself. And continuing to do some more training, close up one more contract on that for class 1 survey cultural resource survey, and then just continue to work on the scoping report and the analysis of a management situation so we can really get -- dive down into the center of that plan. And I think that's all I really wanted to share. Any questions? All right. Thank you very much.

>> RANDY BANIS: [Away from mic] items in the record so that [away from mic]. These are the 12 recommendations that received an average score of strongly agree, which is the highest [away from mic] ranking levels. And I think it's interesting and I think they did a very good job of this. I did not vote for or issue any of these statements myself. I wanted to just guide the members into doing the work. What I did was just to --

>> They're having a hard time hearing you. If you could give the mic back to Nathan. I'll make sure we capture this information.

>> RANDY BANIS: Yeah. So to recap -- the subgroup came up with 12 of those recommendations as strongly support the highest score that's available. And I'd like to read through them. It's not -- they're not very long. Number one, BLM should educate the public about any changes in management through its website, social media, and pamphlets in the field office.

Number two, the BLM should not change how it currently manages filming on lands within the monument by continuing to require a NEPA site evaluation for film permit applications.

Three, the proclamation allows for the renewal, assignment, operation, maintenance, replacement, modification, and upgrade of utilities, pipeline, and telecommunication facilities located within or adjacent to the monument, and this should include their corridors. Monument information kiosks and booths should be located at Cal Baker and the along route 66, highway 62, and Amboy road.

The plan should recognize -- this is number five. The plan should recognize how OHV access, dispersed camping and RV camping practical ways for many to experience and enjoy the monument.

Number six. Dispersed camping should be allowed in Section 28 within the Afton Canyon ACEC.

Number seven, no changes should be made to the special recreation management areas, extended recreation management areas, special unit management plans that would degrade any public access that already exists through preexisting agreements and expectations of the public.

BLM should plan for population growth and increase demand for access to the monument by not precluding opportunities for new campgrounds and disperse remote camping or for motor vehicle access.

The BLM should not make changes -- this sounds like a repetitive to number 7, but it's not, it's just shorter and hammering it home. BLM should not make changes to the existing special recreation management areas and extended recreation management areas within the monument.

The BLM should adopt the current designated route network for the monument's travel management plan.

Number 11, the plan should favor dispersed camping by individuals in small groups over designated campgrounds.

And number 12, the recreational collection of rocks, minerals, gemstones and fossils should continue to be allowed in the monument under the currently existing regulations pertaining to locations, methods, and quantities.

Does anybody find either of those objectionable? Well then I can say by consent that the Desert Advisory Council has accepted the 12 recommendations to put forward to the BLM in its scoping phase of the monument plan. The next job for the subgroup will be to look at the draft management plan when that one is released. And I would hope that the group would be wanting to go through a similar process to issue specific recommendations on that draft management plan. And I hope everybody sticks with us and sticks with this group. They've worked very, very hard and put in a lot of time at their own expense. Subgroup members are not reimbursed for their participation on these -- on the meetings or the field trips. So these people really did a tremendous amount of work and are really dedicated to the DAC, they're dedicated to what we've asked them to do. And that is to advise us on issuing advice to the BLM.

So I guess on behalf of the DAC, I'd like to thank the subgroup and like to thank the DAC for supporting the subgroup as well, because they need our help and our encouragement to keep going forward. So thank you. Any questions? [Away from mic]. Do I hear there's no questions from online? Is that Shelly?

>> Shelly, did you have a question?

>> SHELLY LYNCH: No, I was just asking if there were any other questions for Mike.

>> Thank you.

>> SHELLY LYNCH: And special thanks to the MAC for that effort and providing that input. Okay, we'll move to Palm Springs South Coast. Tim.

>> TIM GILLOON: Thank you. Tim Gilloon, field manager of the Palm Springs South Coast. Thank you all for coming today. I'll hit a couple of topics really quick. Can you bring up those pictures a minute. While she's doing that, we'll address the grants, like Mike I don't have the numbers handy, we had a law enforcement grant utilization, that's a key component of our program of work. And then we're also looking at trying to get some of that restoration and planning in out years to also take a look at some planning grant opportunities.

And then we also have been working with some of our partners in that process and coordinating on where they can get work done. And we worked with the Southern California mountain foundation to help them get a grant in support of that for some work in snow creek and windy point.

All right. Wanted to direct your attention to the screen. As you all know, we had tropical storm Hillary came through and pretty much just pounded the Southern California area. And we'll start off with some pictures of the white water canyon. And the flow right was just tremendous. And you can see how much it -- it cut through here. Next picture. And so you can see it just completely pushed a lot of this stuff out, huge, huge damage, you know, to this area. Next.

These boulders were rolling down, right? And just it's impressive to remind people the power of mother nature and what happens here and also stress the importance of safety during these events as well. Next picture.

And just the amount of erosion. I mean, I think that's estimated at the highest point of that, you know, it's cut down well over 20 some add feet cutting into that hillside. Next slide.

And just again, it's just throughout the entire length of it. Next picture. This is -- and this, of course, doesn't do any justice because these are the aftereffects. If any of you awesome of the news, some of the actual videos the night of were really impressive. I actually saw somebody -- I'm in desert hot springs, and I saw the video of the poor fellow in his car, hazard lights on, swept away. And so he was luckily able to get out and survived, and that started just outside of my neighborhood. Next.

Some of these pictures are some of our -- oh, I can't remember the areas, it's escaped me now. You can see the damage to the roadway. This is on the east side of Coachella Valley. I think it was box canyon and it's going to prevent access for a while. They just completely blew out the roadway there. You can see some tracks and obviously some offroad high clearance vehicles are able to get through there, but again, we don't know the extent of the damage. Next couple pictures.

Yeah, I think that's just a painted hills area, just completely cut through the roads. Getting personnel out and accessing damage, some of these areas it's going to be hard to assess the full damage of what we need to do for restoration and repairs. Next. Slide or couple pictures.

I dealt with this issue the other day. Just personally going out there, having an [away from mic] we helped facilitate bringing some of our crews out to help and getting him access, ingress and egress to his property. Couple pictures. So yeah, just completely just took out some of the -- some of the routes that we have. So I'll go through a couple of -- cover a couple of other topics.

In the DAC report obviously we have, you know, we're heavy in Palm Springs South Coast on renewable energy. So there's additional projects going to be coming up about a few more projects. We're going to be coordinating with CDD and program staff in terms of how do we manage those timelines because there's also additional renewable energy projects throughout the district. Those will go out through announcements and we'll continue to work on solar out in the California desert.

Similar to the Mojave trails national monument, we have our Sand to Snow National Monument planning going on. Right now they're in the process of working with our stakeholders and NGOs on interview process, tribal outreach, and starting that process as well. And then they'll convene some public listening sessions. And so we're trying to follow the same process and pair up and mirror that. But again, those are just delayed just in terms of the timing capacity that we have for our office.

On the other side down south we have the San Jacinto Mountains national monument and we've had a lot of good engagement with the Indians as well as the Forest Service for San Jacinto ranger district. Specifically, Palm Canyon clean up effort. Some people are creating their own mountain bike features, jumps, ramps, curves, things like that. So we'll get out to work with our partners, the tribe, and get that sort of cleaned up on a cleanup day. And at the same time we're reaching out to some of these mountain biking associations and talking to key leaders of those groups and bringing them together and say we're going to set up some meetings and talk about how do we go forward.

So next is generally, you know, we're also covering our restoration and our work efforts. And we're in partnership on the Coachella Canal line continuing and ongoing. We've been able to bring in the Living Desert zoo and be a partner for that. And also a partner for land management. We're considering what additional work we can do in the upcoming years for thousand palms. And of course there's not much in the Palm Springs South Coast office related to salt and sea, so that large project for restoration. We have one pilot project on our side, but Jen can probably speak more about El Centro, they have a lot more of that that we're partnering with other agencies for that.

And also I did want to mention for the Santa Rosa San Jacinto, we were approached by Bighorn institute and they wanted me to mention that they're coming in on their private lands adjacent to the monument, adjacent to the visitor center and they're proposing a 30,000 foot museum dedicated to sheep of the world. They're going to try to tie into our visitor center and it brought to life something I wasn't aware of, but there's an existing campus plan for the visitor center. And so we have been able to re-energize that effort and hopefully work with our partners for just various additional features and improvements for on-site recreation and facilities there. So that sort of is a two-pronged effort and that's going to be really good partnership. Which is they're going to allow -- the intent is to hear facilities and, you know, parking and access and things like that. So really sort of build out that visitor center and the monument features there.

I do want to put a plug out we had a friends of Desert Mountains volunteer Ada Knuckles, received from the director Tracy Stone Manning a lifetime Achievement Award. She had done 11,997 and I think a couple minutes of volunteer work. It's always nice to recognize our public and what they do for us.

And last, some of you may have heard, this will be my last DAC meeting, I'm moving on. I took a position in Idaho with the Forest Service. So any questions on the report? Yes.

>> DICK HOLLIDAY: What is the North Lake demonstration project?

>> TIM GILLOON: The North Lake pilot project from salt and sea, is that what you're referring to?

>> DICK HOLLIDAY: Yeah, you had something in your thing about there [away from mic] something do with the salt and sea.

>> TIM GILLOON: The restoration efforts around the salt and sea, we're not the lead for that, but they do want to do a pilot project for -- they selected our spot at that location do some geotechnical work to just assess how are they going to be able to structure their restoration efforts along the edge of the salt and sea.

>> DICK HOLLIDAY: They talking about building a [away from mic]?

>> TIM GILLOON: I don't know. I mean, I think it's leading towards potentially a larger restoration effort. And this is just this first thing they've identified is that this might be a pilot project.

>> DICK HOLLIDAY: What are they going to do?

>> TIM GILLOON: I don't have all the details, but it would be sort of just adding restoration to help stabilize and add more marsh habitat, increase some of that, you know, the national biological functions there. It also helps to mitigate some of the dust issues, dust suppression, things like that. I don't have a lot of information at this time for that.

>> DICK HOLLIDAY: Also in your report you were talking about doing some work there at the north [away from mic] what does that entail as far as access to the public to get in there?

>> TIM GILLOON: There's a parking lot, as you approach, there's a public parking lot with a little kiosk there and you can -- people can walk around the Dos Palmas ACEC. There's some pond for restoration of pup fish, so we wanted to have people stay out of those. But there's other pond areas and sort of just palm oasis. It's a nice location if you happen to get out there.

>> I've been there.

>> TIM GILLOON: It's really nice. So people will still have access.

>> DICK HOLLIDAY: Okay. [Away from mic] we went in there was [away from mic]. The other thing is as far as the thing about the [away from mic] seems like maybe the -- I don't know if you can do the work with them or find some way where they can generate these efforts for themselves rather than putting them where you don't want them to put them.

>> TIM GILLOON: That's the idea is to be collaborative and see what ideas out there and, yes, working with them.

>> DICK HOLLIDAY: Thank you.

>> TIM GILLOON: Mm-hmm. Thank you very much.

>> SHELLY LYNCH: Okay, thanks, Tim. Moving to Ridgecrest. Tom.

>> TOM BICKAUSKAS: Good afternoon. We had pictures of horrible things that happened to roads and his area. I don't have the pictures, but I can tell you that we had 5.1 inches here in Ridgecrest last Sunday. So you on the field trip yesterday saw the incredibly quick work that was done to clear roads. I can report that we did close our office on Monday and had some people telework. We were largely unscathed here in Ridgecrest. But we're still trying to get out and survey the damage as well. So highway 178 north of Trona basically has a big hole under the highway. The road is holding itself up. It may be fixed by now, but as of middle of the week it was not.

Another natural disaster we had was forest doesn't get too many wild land fires, but we did have a fire in the sand canyon area, which is due west of here called the no name fire. Called. No name fire because it was thought to have started in no name canyon as opposed to Sand Canyon. But it burned 1114 acres, 15 of which was LEDWP land, which we also think was the origin of it. I have to say one thing positive, being a slower wildfire year allowed us to get a lot of aircraft support, and then basically encapsulated or surrounded the fire with slurry right away, and then they were able to get two helicopters working like amps back and forth 15-minute round trips dumping a lot of water on the fire. And then in the afternoon, the winds changed 180 degrees, blew the fire out. So you know, sometimes you can just -- the right things come together.

So our horse and burro folks completed an adoption on August 19th. That's something that's not in your report. And they adopted out eight horses and ten burros. So that was -- that was a successful one-day adoption. Alex and his team started doing a bait trap gather for burros down in El Centro at the chocolate mountain herd management area. We just started that two days ago. And already have some success bringing those burros back to Ridgecrest.

On the grants front, while I don't have the exact dollars, I know that we received most of what we asked for and we were asking for roundups grant, the law enforcement grant, and restoration. So we're usually pretty successful in getting those grants, people in our field office know that we've had a longstanding restoration program. So I think we're going to be in pretty good shape continuing our work on restoration management.

I did sign in your group the exploratory drilling and I signed decision for that last Tuesday. The decision is [away from mic]. On August 16th, through a federal register notice of intent, we opened the scoping for the conglomerate Mesa Mojave precious metals exploratory drilling. That's east of lone pine. And [away from mic] tribal letters have gone out on that as well as the federation notices and all the federation notice, there's only one, but also the prenotifications that we did to make folks aware of that.

And our Desert Tortoise research natural area, we will be having a workday, a volunteer workday operation with Desert Tortoise preserve committee on October 14th. So area beautification, continuing to check in with [away from mic] because as you know, we have a lot of fence out there. We like to keep that fixed.

And this past week Indian wells valley water authority, those are the folks that provide advantages that groundwater here as a result of the sustainable groundwater management act was enacted about seven years ago, the groundwater authority kicked off their scoping meetings. The groundwater authority would like to build a water pipeline from Cal city, California city, to Ridgecrest. And they want real water down from Northern California to put it into a pipeline to Cal city to get it to Ridgecrest. I did a little detail about that project in the report.

The BLM has been working on -- my office has been working on a geotechnical permit for them to be boring. We are a little bit behind the county on the actual pipeline NEPA. But the contractor is the same for NEPA. So stay tuned for more, you know, on that particular issue.

So then [away from mic] broadband project, you might have heard about this earlier, he. This is a target that's being run by the California department of technology. And it's being -- the NEPA is being done through Caltrans, federal highways administration has given them the responsibility for NEPA. Ridgecrest is going to have a joint project with Bakersfield being the lead, Bakersfield [away from mic] we have a proposed line that crosses our boundary. And so more to come with that. But this is an interesting project and it's an administration priority. And it's affecting lots of offices, but as far as Ridgecrest goes, we're just getting kicked off now. I don't even think it's in the report. And it's pretty new. So that's what I have to report. [Away from mic] if there's any questions, I can take them.

>> RANDY BANIS: [Away from mic] Jack Thompson who couldn't make it here today asked me to [away from mic] provide us the status of [away from mic] proposals in Coachella Valley [away from mic].

>> TOM BICKAUSKAS: We have one explanation planned, if approved, the company drilled half the holes they were authorized. They drilled two out of the four they were authorized, and they have done nothing else. So the plan of operation is to open, there's no activity there. And then the second plan of operation we received to drill the other side of Panamint like. The company never completed the studies they were required to complete so it's been quiet. We have no other applications right now.

>> RANDY BANIS: There's one other [away from mic] raised your hand later. [Away from mic] natural research area, just [away from mic] he's joining us today. [Away from mic]. No more questions for Tom? Okay, thanks, Tom.

>> SHELLY LYNCH: Moving to Barstow, Marc.

>> MARC STAMER: All right. Good afternoon, everybody. Thanks for having me. I kind of wanted to give some updates, one about our staffing before I jump into more the operational things that are going on. But we've taken -- I counted the number of position requires think we're sitting at about ten vacancies right now. A couple of which I'll say key supervisory positions about. Jeff is taking a long-term advisory position and our rec resource assistants are also vacant. We need to get those filled soon. The other two -- the other positions that are kind of key are both of our realty specialists positions. We have two in the office. They do will have recent retirement and one took a job earlier in the year and went to the Forest Service. Those two positions vacant as well. I'm sharing that with you not because I'm looking for sympathy with you but for our responsibility to requests coming in for that matter. And recognize that's kind of a challenge right now, and until we get those positions filled that's going to continue to be a challenge. So appreciate your patience with us.

Let's see, operation wise, this Monday we're ending the shared use with palms and it's closing out this Monday. We had an OHV grant funded project where we basically resurfaced that project. That was completed and that weekend that it was complete we got our nice rain that came in. The work that they had done was impacted. I won't say it was significant impacts, but it did impact and damage the work we had just done on the road, unfortunately. So looking at the initial assessment that we've done across the unit for the storm damage, I think we're estimating right now about \$300,000 worth of damage. Nothing at this point has been identified that's life threatening, it's mostly I would consider it nuisance type sediment. But cumulatively will require work to be done to get the roads back in proper order and safe conditions.

So let's see. And kind of right now we're shifting into prepping for the new -- the busy season. We talked about the post National Public Lands day coming up in September. We're doing a cleanup out at giant rock, the county is still working on that. We're starting one coming up in September. Cal 300, there's a change with how that event has been run. And then King of the Hammers moving into January. Lots of races in between. King of the hammers will have that area closed as part of the events as well.

For Dumont dunes, we're getting ready for the holiday season out there and wanted to explain everybody to that we're going to change a little bit of the operation that we're doing there. In the past if you came into Dumont dunes on a holiday weekend, you'd see four of our park rangers down by the fee stations helping public figuring out how to use and navigate the fee stations, how to pay the fees and as the public moved through up to find their spots to camp and stay. This year also what's happened in the past because of COVID, I think we closed the visitor center as well. So the goal for this year is we are going to -- park rangers aren't going to be down at the fee stations. I've asked that we pair up in teams and I want them out patrolling the area, contacting folks, having conversations with those groups and just engaging in the public up on the top areas where the recreating public are. Our vendors are going to change a little bit. In the past you were able to ride your motorcycle, commit, right up to the vendor. We're going to close it to all traffic, make it more of a walk-through, walk-in. We do some potential impacts and safety concerns from a safety standpoint and just change how that's working with the traffic from in there. You'll see them parked on the outside of it, not a big deal. So that's another shift that you'll see that will be happening. And the goal is also to get that opened back up to the public on weekends, busy holiday weekends when we see the most public use and hopefully get some more of that desert education [away from mic].

Let's see. Last time we met I talked about the DDC a bit. Quite a bit. We've had a couple meetings with the Mojave national preserve, national parks, and about working together to -- we move forward to open that plan up. I've been working with some staff to add a bit of a draft, put together kind of an organization, if we're to staff this out what's the organizational chart we would need with the hopes of them filling in those boxes and looking to see what partners could come in and assist in those critical boxes. So that's still in progress. And by and large, partly because of staffing, challenges with staffing and you've got to have somebody to do it. It's still moving for, but we're still having the conversations with folks. There's still some facility work that needs to be done. Assuming we can get that open, the less impasse we'll have in that arena as well.

Let's see. I think for -- the only other thing that I have for an update is with our OHV grants, thank you for reminding us, so this year we got our restoration request, this is all just the intent to fund, right, for the grants. So for the restoration grant, we got about \$368,000, notified of that intent to fund.

Our safety grant which helps with us Dumont is about 97,000. And for our law enforcement, we actually got a little bit of a bump at 310,000. And then the one that hit us was our [away from mic] we typically ask for right around 900 to a million. This year we were only awarded 457,000. Part of that has to do with a few years ago the -- our office and I think a few other offices were put on the -- I can't remember the name of the -- what they call it when you're on -- it's like probation, I'll just say. So you get on that, ten point deduction. We owned it and we're dealing with that. This should be our last year, hopefully we'll get back into good standing with the state parks and that shouldn't impact us as much when we move forward. We are going to change a little bit with how we do business with writing our grants and try to get ahead of the game more proactively, I'll say, working with partners but also with state parks as we're developing the grants now rather than waiting until January when we get the official comments back. Will emphasize the performance of the public commenting on the writing of those drafts once they're submitted. That feedback is invaluable to us. Any questions?

>> [Away from mic] probation.

>> Yes, right.

>> [Away from mic].

>>What's that?

>> Probation for?

>> I honestly don't know. Yeah. I –

>> I didn't know [away from mic] I assume certain report was wrong or something? [Away from mic].

>> It's usually -- those types of things usually are around the spending, right, expenditures. But I honestly don't know.

>> [Away from mic] same boat. We missed a final -- final report submission by one day and so we'll be suffering two years of penalties for that one day.

>> [Away from mic].

>>Thank you.

>> Thanks, Marc.

>> SHELLY LYNCH: Thanks, Marc. Okay, moving to El Centro, Jennifer, if you want to maybe give a little bit of an intro and share a little bit about you and where you come from.

>> JENNIFER WHYTE: I'm Jennifer Whyte, I started working with the BLM 25 years ago as a volunteer. I started in the [?] cleanup which first year I think we had a thousand people show up. And I just saw somebody wearing a T-shirt the other day in the office that said 25-year anniversary, which was last year. So I'm glad it's still going.

So I have been here in El Centro now for six weeks. So still learning the ropes, still drinking from the fire hose, but our OHV grants for the intent to award, we got 425,000 in grant ops -- ground ops.

200,000 in safety. And 389,000 for law enforcement. The final awards will be given out from the state parks first part of September.

So as for the storm, we had a little bit of damage, not as much as Palm Springs, but we did have some. Our office was also closed down because we had quite a bit of flooding. The upper portion on the king valley road passed the wind project, that road got washed out and is going to need some restoration. The one, Batista trail, there was still standing water so we need to look at that. And we just know that panic gorge is going to have some landslides and washouts, but we couldn't get up there because it's seasonal closures. So that is what happened with our -- the storm in our area.

Since our report came out, there are a couple updates. On the SMP exploration plan, we are finalizing the NEPA and the decision record in FONZI and we're hoping to have a decision next week. So -- and the imperial planning county commission is planning to have their planning meeting on September 13th. On our trail signing, I am happy to report that up in Mark canyon and McCain valley we are 90% done with our signage and our park rangers have been running into visitors, doing great visitor contact and letting them know what designated routes are and to stay on routes. So super excited for all of our hard-working rangers that are almost have the entire area done. That's one of the exciting things for us.

Let's see. We also just signed a Memorandum of Understanding with tread lightly to increase more volunteer opportunities out in the desert for more cleanups and more outreach and anything that we can partner with tread lightly with. So super excited to have that MOU signed. It was just signed a couple weeks ago.

And our East Mesa solar facility, our second stakeholder pre-application meeting will be held August 30th. So next Wednesday got that scheduled. And the one other thing to bring up that did not make the report is we have had Mesquite mine, a plan of exploration submitted. It was a preliminary plan. It has been reviewed and commented on. We have returned our comments back to Mesquite mine and we're waiting on a revised plan. So that is what I have for my report. Any questions?

>> What's the Mesquite mine trying to do?

>> JENNIFER WHYTE: They're talking about expansion of the gold mine. It's on the east side of the office. East of the dunes.

>> Yeah, I know where it is. I just [away from mic].

>> JENNIFER WHYTE: I know there is monitoring. I haven't heard when it's happening. But I do know our signing folks and signing crew are getting ready to ensure that all of those -- that signage is up.

>> The rain [away from mic].

>> Hope so.

>> Thank you.

>> Mm-hmm. Thank you.

>> Thank you.

>> SHELLY LYNCH: Thanks, Jennifer. Okay. And moving to fire. Paul.

>> PAUL GIBBS: Good afternoon, everyone. I'm going to be fairly brief. Most of the time this year we're pretty focused on preparedness, just being ready for fires and suppression, which is responding to those fires. And so the only updates I have is since report was prepared we have added additional 15 fires on lands that we protect.

And then in addition to that, there's probably 30 or so fires that we've responded to assisting our cooperators. Four fires maybe of note being larger, typically over a hundred acres is what we're looking at for larger fires, and Tom already talked about no name, that was one of them. Another one was Cody fire, which is 175 acres about, 115 on BLM land. And BLM's land and Cal Fire protection. And then the two larger fires, you know, one of those was the Vonny, so that started on private and burned on to BLM lands. That one was about 2,300 acres or so, about half of BLM lands and half on private lands.

And then the largest fire that you maybe have heard quite a bit in the news about is the York fire. That started on private with the Mojave preserve, then burned on to National Park Service lands on the preserve. And then on to the Needles Field Office there for Mike and ended in Nevada with the southern Nevada district, which is cooperator of the BLM agency, the same agency field office or district office to our east. And that one burned around 93,000 acres, so another large fire in Mojave Preserve. About 75,000 of those acres were on the preserve and about 9,000 on BLM, and about 8,000 more on private and [away from mic] lands. That's all I have unless there's questions.

>> Do you -- I don't know if [away from mic] did you put in the money or can you put in money to the [away from mic] you're taking care of some awful [away from mic].

>> No, typically they haven't seen --

>> That's a pretty big stretch, uh?

>> PAUL GIBBS: Sometimes what we'll do is we'll have implemental projects, and so, you know, one of the ones around steel peak, which was OHV funded, partially fuels funded program until riverside County, so we did help implement that project. Some of our folks, therefore, in the winter did charge to those funds. But not as far as direct, more like a fuels project.

>> [Away from mic].

>> PAUL GIBBS: Right. Any questions?

>> The York fire was in Joshua Tree woodlands?

>> PAUL GIBBS: Yes. I haven't heard any -- like we haven't heard any stats as far as how many trees in particular, but a lot of that habitat there are Joshua trees. Yes.

>> That's only a few years after the sea [away from mic].

>> Yeah.

>> So it's -- [away from mic] sorry to hear that. That woodland doesn't recover quickly.

>> Right. And essentially just east of the dome fire area, still see the dome road west and east.

>> [Away from mic].

>> Okay.

>> SHELLY LYNCH: Okay. Thanks, Paul. And with that, I'll hand it back over to Randy. Thanks, everybody, for the report outs.

>> RANDY BANIS: Thank you, Shelly and thanks to the team. We're just a little bit early, but I think it will be good as far as moving into public comments. Or do you want to take a short break?

>> MICHELLE VAN DER LINDEN: We'll take a short break in case anybody's joining us right at 1:45 to present public comment.

>> RANDY BANIS: Good idea. All right. Let's take a short break. [Away from mic] 1:45. Thank you.

[Break]

>> RANDY BANIS: Hi, everybody. Thanks for rejoining us. We're going to start with the public comment period. Everybody gets three minutes. The best use of your time is advising the DAC on advising BLM. That's your best use of this time. But otherwise, the three minutes is yours and you're welcome to use it. If there are any more questions, [away from mic] if you have them, because I'll be calling out the names off the speaker cards and I have them in random order, so if there's anyone else, make sure I get those. Because once we hear from the last person, we'll end up moving right along and we don't want to skip you. Also for folks who are online, there will be able to raise their hand and so please do raise your hand and we'll -- we'll move on to the folks who are online after we hear from the public hearing portion of our meeting. Just randomly, the first -- the first public comment is Will [away from mic].

>> WILL LEBSEBER: Oh, gees. All I wanted to say is I would like the DAC to advise the BLM if all levels that we need to protect the pinnacles. You have 30 seconds to move and if you don't you drop. And they've started to climb out there and if they don't get out of there, there aren't going to be any pinnacles left. That's all I've got to say.

>> RANDY BANIS: You need the [away from mic] structure, that's like a coral that wraps around like the limestone features. And once the -- it falls off and breaks off, you're losing that very important part of that natural area. So you've got to hold on to it [away from mic] and that does need to be protected. So I would definitely echo what Will said. Thanks, Will. Appreciate that. Okay. Next one on the list I have Ruth. Ruth Hidalgo. Good morning. I think I caught you by surprise. Kayla [?].

>> RUTH HIDALGO: Today's gone quickly. Ruth Hidalgo, recreational rock [away from mic]. First and foremost, I want to thank the subgroup to the DAC for their work on the MAC as you're calling it now, and I was absolutely thrilled, of course, to see rock county as a recommendation for the monument. But there were also some other ones that were also important and it was nice to see a diverse group of people come together and support some very poignant things to happen in the monument. And I hope that -- I appreciate the DAC taking in those submissions and I hope that you are able to get a form together to be able to formally present those to the BLM. Which brings me to my next part. We talked about or heard about different positions on the DAC. We have seven open and five nominations. Is that correct?

>> RANDY BANIS: Well, what I heard was there were five in pocket that are in -- from a previous submission.

>> RUTH HIDALGO: That have not been approved?

>> RANDY BANIS: It hasn't gone all way through the cycle. Remember that's a local, state, national office decision and finally a letter signed by the secretary. So [away from mic] secretary, but I'm sorry take your time. We'll make sure you get your time back. But if you can just -- I just wanted to thank the BLM for getting ahead of the ball on this one. Sometimes they wait till after these terms expire before they call for applications. This time they're working extra hard and they got the word out before our terms expire. And so, yes, seven of us our terms expire in January, so hopefully they can bring someone over from the five that are pending and hopefully we can see some fast action on the applications that were submitted during last week's deadline.

>> RUTH HIDALGO: Thank you. That was my next question, if there's going to be expiring and coming and if we're ever actually going to get -- it sounds like we've got it all coming to where it might actually come together. So that's good to hear. The other comment that I wanted to make is the DAC used to take comments after the presentations from the general public. That was -- that allowed those of us who came -- a lot of us drive on our own dime to attend has to meetings to have the opportunity to speak on things that maybe we can't come here for but we learned about or to ask questions about these great presentations and the things that were here. Tom's presentation today I learned a lot, you know. But when you come in and then you're removed from it to the afternoon, it kind of takes away from the actual public input on these things. And so I hope that the DAC would consider maybe going back to the old format to where the public can comment after the presentations as well rather than one group at the end. And there might be days when you have more than three minutes to talk so we could do a little bit and a little bit and a little bit. Thank you.

>> RANDY BANIS: Thanks, Ruth. Kayla. Thanks for coming. You have the floor.

>> KAYLA BROWNE: Thank you so much. I want to thank the BLM and the DAC. It was a wonderful field trip yesterday and the meetings have been really informative today, so thank you. My name is Kayla Brown, I am a policy associate with friends of Inyo and I'm also a member of the public lands roundtable. I live right in lone pine, so conglomerate Mesa is really near and dear to my heart. It is my backyard. So I want to also thank the BLM for making the scoping period for the EIS 60 days. It really allows us to get a lot of people who know a lot of stuff about the area to be able to provide comment and help shape the EIS. I do want to just flag a concern. In the federal register notice it did say that the plan for the draft EIS to come out would be fall/winter of 2023 where the public comment period does not close until fall of '23. So it's a very tight timeline to be able to read through and incorporate and consider public comment.

Conglomerate Mesa is a really beautiful area. If you folks can get there, you should. There are tons of Joshua trees, mature and little teeny tiny babies. It's -- the fruit -- the last couple years they have fruited, which is really wonderful to see.

And the area also has a special endemic species of plant called the Inyo rock daisy, which the California Department of Fish and Wildlife actually just published their report to recommend listing the Inyo rock daisy as a threatened or endangered species. There's another process with that, but the range is basically from Sarabortal to the north and ends at pine Mesa. So really only exists in that one area. So those, again, if anybody needs help getting out there, I can help. I have vehicles that you can use or I can

drive you. It is a little bit of a rough drive, so if you're not comfortable with off-road, I know there's plenty of people in this room who can help out with that. So thank you so much.

>> RANDY BANIS: Thank you, Kayla. I just would like to add to my favorite [away from mic] in the California desert is underneath the conglomerate Mesa. Someone at the Sierra club called it [away from mic] and I take exception to that. Thank you. Next I have Greg. You still here? Good afternoon. And then Sam will follow you.

>> GREG HERRING: Well, I'm Greg Herring, thanks for having us here. My wife and I live in pioneer town. I'm a retired marine officer for the last 25 years and been a gold miner too. That's why I'm here today. Gold mining. There was a group who has drafted a proposal that is supposed to be submitted sometime soon for the Chuckwalla National Monument between Coachella and Blythe. A very large area. And it has to do with the eagle mountain mining district, about a 20-plus square mile area of BLM land just on the eastern boundary of the Joshua Tree National Park next to the Kiser -- old Kiser iron mine. That small mountain mining district has about 400 acres of plaster claims, and I'm representing all the owners, including an organization my wife and I belong to first class miners incorporated, there's about 150 miners in it.

Now we're small-scale miners. All of us that go to Vega mountain mining district are small school, casual miners only, small tool mining. I took the opportunity months ago to take him out there the area, the person that offered this, it's remote. There's one road into it. Through the Joshua national tree park. Don't put this in the park, park plans to improve it if you do, and we'll have a lot more people out there. Why is that important? Because it is a natural desert big horn sheep corridor. And you're going to disrupt the sheep. We might have a dozen miners out there on a weekend or something like that. Hundred yards away we could have a herd of sheep grazing. They look at us, we look at them, we don't bother each other. You put this thing in the park, you're going to disrupt that corridor and disrupt the sheep. Besides the fact that we miners can't go out there anymore and do what we do, try to make a little profit on what we're doing out there. So we strongly oppose the Chuckwalla National Monument and all its other little side agendas of which this is one of them.

>> [Away from mic].

>> GREG HERRING: Thank you.

>> RANDY BANIS: Just to see off, this is the [away from mic] still on the table somewhere? It is, okay. Thanks. Hi, Sam.

>> SAM BURKE: Hi.

>> RANDY BANIS: Welcome back.

>> SAM BURKE: You've got my notes?

>> RANDY BANIS: I have your notes and you can have those back. You got it. Thank you.

>> SAM BURKE: My name is Sam Burke, and welcome back to Ridgecrest. I've been attending these meetings for a very, very long time. The first meeting I attended was up in Bishop right before the DAC was established. And Ed Hasting and a few others were there. Most of them have kicked the bucket now. But anyway, I wanted to say a couple things.

The DAC is a regular gated commission. And as such, you need to have the public meetings, you need to have public outreach, you need to get in touch with the newspapers, and in some instances, the newspapers don't really cover anything anymore. So it doesn't help getting in touch with them. But getting in touch with the Chamber of Commerce and each area to let them know that you're going to have a DAC meeting is really, really important. Another thing that needs to be done too, a lot of us that live in the desert, we don't have an upload, download good enough for Zoom. We can't do it. And so what happens, a lot of us can't even attend the meetings if it's in Blythe or wherever. So what could be done is you could open up the field offices on that Saturday and have the residents of that field office go to that meeting and just sit there and they could listen. And it would be good PR. It would get back in touch with the community. Because a lot of information comes from the community. And having a meeting -- I mean, sure, I like valley, I like them all. But it's really indicative to have it close, you know, the community needs to speak to you. And you need to listen.

And there's a local project that's coming up, it's going to involve 50 miles of pipeline. It's going to be under Arnold W that the BLM is going to bless and not bless. But I think it needs to be elevated to an EIS. And the reason is, the tribes are not being notified by an EIR. The group that's handling the EIR. And also these village communities are not being communicated with. There needs to be more of an outreach in regards to that. Since there are federal funds that are going to be utilized in this project, it really needs the scope of an EIS.

>> Sam, your time is out. We should have enough time if you'd like a second three-minute period, we can accommodate you.

>> Thank you, I'll try to make it really concise.

>> Sam, we can give you a second three minutes, but we have to get three the rest of the folks that are waiting in line.

>> So you want me go now?

>> I apologize.

>> No problem.

>> I'll call you back. Next is Liam. Liam Connelly.

>> LIAM CONNELLY: Hi, my name is Liam Connelly. I'm a preserve manager and conservation coordinator the tourist preserve committee and I have to thank all, friends of Inyo and members of the Desert Advisory Council and BLM for attending this and setting this up today. As Tom mentioned earlier, I want to plug the details of the events we're having on the 15th of October. I'll be teaching various skills out at the national area, the DTA in Cal city where there will be vertical mulching, removing trash and touching up the grounds to make it better for tourism and tourists alike who come through.

There was a few things I wanted to mention, for anyone who would like to help volunteer during this event, if you would like to directly volunteer, my email is very long so I'll try to make it quick, it's email me at the dtpc.preserve.manager@tortoise-tracks.org. It's a very long email. I didn't come up with it when I signed up for the job, but if anyone would like to volunteer for this event, it's at Cal city and it should be -- prior events from gone from 8:00 a.m. till noon.

But if you'd like to help out with Desert Tortoises and not get dirt underneath your fingernails in Redlands, California, there's an event called drinking days in which I will be there from 12:00 to 4:00 selling merchandise including hats, shirts, plushees and you can sport a new tortoise shell. So they're having fun in the sun and there should be reptiles and I'll try to bring shell silver seen it along which is the name of the Desert Tortoise I'm looking for at the moment which I'm hoping to rehabilitate and rewild.

But I wanted to add name some details. Tom, thank you for that, mentioned the details earlier and I wanted to elaborate a little bit and put my email out there if anyone wants to join in. Just wanted to put in my two cents and thank you so much for all of now.

>> The date one more time.

>> LIAM CONNELLY: October 15th, but the Desert Tortoise drinking days event is October 12th at Redlands, California, at the escape brewery and that goes from, I believe, 11:00 to 4:00 p.m.

>> Awesome.

>> Where do you put that in the newsletter?

>> That would be cool if that could be put in the newsletters too, if you don't mind.

>> No problem.

>> The 13th is the Saturday.

>> I said 13th for the event and October 12th is when the Desert Tortoise drinking days is.

>> Oh. [Away from mic].

>> LIAM CONNELLY: Tracks.org and and there's a dash like a minus sign between tortoise and tracks.

>> [Away from mic].

>> RANDY BANIS: Looks like we have three hands raised. So let's start with Matthew. You have the floor. You can unmute yourself and we're ready for you.

>> MATTHEW: Good afternoon. And I just wanted to thank the El Centro field staff for just the last couple months I've been doing some research on the public lands that El Centro field office received. And the staff have been so responsive and amazing and I just wanted to thank them for the information they've given us. Also my mother's joined us and has been very impressed by how thorough and just very guest friendly. So thank you so much. And I just wanted to chime in and also thank you today. This has been a very informative meeting. So thank you.

>> RANDY BANIS: Thank you for coming, Matthew. Really appreciate it. We have an old friend, Eileen Anderson online. Eileen, good afternoon.

>> EILEEN ANDERSON: Good afternoon. Thanks so much to each of you on the DAC, as a former DAC member, you know, your service is important. I have a few questions, I may not get through them all, so I'll get back in line. And they're all for Tom and the Ridgecrest Field Office, actually. My first one is

a follow-on to Sam's issue with regards to the Indian wells groundwater authority new water pipeline. And I went to the SEQA meeting on Wednesday evening, and it was announced that the SEQA scoping comment period would also be the NEPA scoping period. And that was like, news to me. I hadn't seen anything in the federal register about that. And it closes, like, next Thursday. And I just asked at the meeting that the deadline be extended, needless to say, because while SEQA and April-- NEPA do share some commonalities, the laws are different and need to be addressed separately as well. So I -- and it was also said that it would be a joint EIR EA, and I agree with Sam that I think the BLM should take a hard look at that because of all of the conservation lands that it's going through and the listed species that are involved. We believe that it would be raised to an Environmental Impact Statement.

By the way, I'm a senior scientist with the center for biological diversity now. So that was comment on that. And then I had a couple of actual questions, and then some comments on the Avatus mitigation and MOU between the state and the Feds, which generally we support that cooperative effort for mitigation. But I'm just wondering what the duration of the funding is for the Avatus project. And then some of the issues that I see with that is, you know, unless -- so the -- it was a great presentation this morning, Tom, on, you know, your ideas about how to improve the habitat for the Desert Tortoise at Mojave ground squirrel, et cetera. But gosh, it seems like, and a lot of it was, you know, route illegal route proliferation, rehabbing those routes. But unless law enforcement and the ORV community are more successful in stopping this illegal route creation and proliferation, this mitigation could be like a never-ending source of mitigation for permanent impacts from projects. You can rehab a lot of stuff, but it doesn't keep people from driving places where they shouldn't be. And I will save my next comment and I'll get back in line. Thank you.

>> Thank you, Eileen. And also want [away from mic] we have Anitra. Welcome back.

>> ANITRA KASS: Hi, everybody, I'm A New Hampshire -- Anitra Kass. Certainly thinking about everybody impacted by the tropical storm. I live in the Coachella Valley as well, got a ton of rain but luckily no damage to my house or the roads around my house. Of course, know that Jack Thompson can't be there today and thinking of all our friends there at white water and mission creek preserves. Only in only do they have to deal with the flood and the rains personally, but also professionally as a lot of Tim's pictures showed us earlier.

Similarly to the field office reports, PCTA is getting reports of significant damage to the Pacific Crest trail. Some of which are on BLM lands. We are doing as much inventory as we can, but we only have a few staff. This time of year we don't have that many seasonal staff because, you know, it's really hot to do trail work in the desert. Except when we break record -- the high record -- the lowest high record ever in Palm Springs was just recently broken. I know that was a mouthful. So on that one day it wasn't too hot, but it was too wet, clearly. So we don't have a lot of staff. Our access points have been washed out so we can't access the trail do assessments in a lot of cases. But just know that I am looking forward to working with our BLM partners, our local volunteers, and our core crew partners to start planning and addressing these issues.

Additionally, PCTA has posted the southern Sierra regional representative job. We are filling it. Not that I don't love working with Ridgecrest, but I'll be really excited when we have a Sierra rep so I can go back to manage 512 miles versus a thousand. The application period does close tomorrow. So I'm hopeful at the next DAC meeting I'll be able to announce a southern Sierra regional representative to this group. I don't know if you were worried, but don't be, I'm going to stay in my role as the Social regional

representative. So Palm Springs and El Centro, you're stuck with me at least for -- I'm not -- I'm only 45, so retirement's a long way off. So for a long time you're stuck with me.

As you probably know through the passage of the national trail system act in 1968, Section 2C provides for nonprofit trail groups to assist in planning processes for the PCT. And so with that, I'm excited to be involved with the sand snow and white water wild and seen refer planning processes as they overlap the PCT designation. Excited to be involved in that when the time is right.

And last, I wanted to thank Randy for his burro adoption story. It's really beautiful. I'm not public affairs or marketing for BLM, but I definitely think they should interview, record that, make a video, put it on their website to inform people of what to expect. But also to tell them what a wonderful opportunity that really is. So with that, thank you. Thank you, thank you.

>> RANDY BANIS: Thank you, Anita. I'll say hello to my burros for you. Good luck on resorting the PCT, in all seriousness. Do you have a minute or so to give one more bite at the apple for same?

>> Randy, can we get that clarifying comment?

>> TIM GILLOON: Just a clarifying comment allow the differences between EA, environmental amendment and IES, environmental [away from mic] statement, the public outreach portion of that is virtually the same. Right. In terms of our email lists and most federal agencies. The only difference is just sort of whether or not, you know, the agency [away from mic] significant impact. But the process for public outreach are virtually the same. So whether or not it's an EA or an EIS, we're going to be doing all of the same outreach to the public.

>> Good. Thank you.

>> And we're ran a couple minutes over but we did have some back and forth between --

>> I think we'll be able to make it up. I'll work hard for that.

>> We've got Sam.

>> I'd like that. Sam, one more bite at the apple.

>> SAM BURKE: Yes. I also wrote a letter, actually it was two letters in regards to the new rules. And I would like the DAC and the BLM to really take a look at that, because under the multiple use that BLM is under [?] it's going to be different. So I gave a copy of my letter to Greg Miller, and he can share it with the rest of the DAC members.

The last thing I want to say, I'm requesting the BLM or the DAC to try to help the tribal members get back on to the base so they can see their sacred sites. They -- for the last couple years they've had problems. And sure, we have changes in command. But criminal is still really the owner of some of those areas. And so they need their -- they need your help. Whether it's the DAC, the BLM, or whatever. They need to have access. Thank you.

>> Thank you, Sam. Thank you. Eileen, if you're still on the line, one more round for you, please.

>> EILEEN ANDERSON: Yeah. Can you hear me? Oh, yes, I think so. Great. Thank you so much. I just have one other thing I want to bring up, and this is with regards to the Avantus and the BLM state MOU. While the mitigation basically permanently retired the livestock grazing privileges there, last year

BLM permitted livestock grazing across part of that allotment and never notified CDFW or Avantus about it in violation, I believe, of the mitigation agreement. We actually had to appeal that decision because of that, and so I'm just really concerned that while there is this MOU, there still seems to be lack of communication between the agencies and, you know, in this case the project proponent about, you know, the whole mitigation. So I'm hoping that BLM can fix that problem as this moves forward. Because this is sort of a new pilot project, if you will, and so we want to see it implemented correctly. And thank you all of the field office managers for their reports. I always find them fascinating. Thank you so much.

>> Thank you for joining us. Thanks, Eileen. With that, folks, we're just about still right on time and is Erin ready for us?

>> I am.

>> RANDY BANIS: Thanks a lot for waiting for us. But the floor is now all yours and we can see you and hear you and looking forward to what you have to offer us today.

>> ERIN ADAMS: Thank you so much. I'm thrilled to be here today. I really appreciated this meeting and enjoyed it so far. And it's an honor to address this panel of leaders and the leaders from the community that have joined us today. Today I'm actually -- so I'll tell you a little bit about myself. My name is Erin Adams, and I'm the director of government and external affairs here for general Savannah Veith -- Savidge here. And I look at the nexus between the community and the military. And what we specifically look at is how the military can impact the community and how even the community can impact the military mission. And we try our best to mitigate that. So you'll see me at public meetings or - or such, and please feel free to reach out to me if you see concerns or issues yourself.

Today I want to focus on a very specific program that's relevant to everyone in that room that I wish I could be there with you today. But it's called the Mojave desert Sentinel landscape proposal. It's in the pre proposal stage. Michelle, help me out because I can't see the audience. Is anyone familiar with the Sentinel landscape program? I'm going to guess that's a no, because there wasn't a single one in California.

>> MICHELLE VAN DER LINDEN: We have one hand raised. We have one hand raised that's familiar.

>> ERIN ADAMS: That is amazing. For the rest of you, I'm going to you the elevator speech on what it is and it's going to be clear as mud at the end. I found it's a very esoteric topic so if you have any questions, let me know. Basically it's a coliving -- coalition of federal, state, local governments that come together and we work together to sustain land use practices in and around military installations and ranges. It was founded in 2013 by USDA, DoD, and the Department of Interior. The Trifecta of the three big land managers in the United States. Federal land managers. And the idea was that these three land managers are like hey, listen, guys, we have a lot of similar goals and objectives with managing land, and furthering our missions. What if we were to partner up and cost share on some of these things? Recruit other partners and try to move the needle on big projects and big mission goals.

So we got together, we formed the Sentinel landscape program. The idea is that the different military installations would propose to this Trifecta their ideas for Sentinel landscape. A landscape is a designated geographical area where conservation, defense, and agricultural interests all converge. Think of it like a ven diagram where you have -- everybody has a different mission set and then you look at

where they're going to overlap. And where they overlap is where we can all work together. So we proposed this ven diagram, so to speak, to the federal cooperating committee who is the DoD, USDA, and DOI secretariat level folks, and we're asking them to designate the Mojave Desert Sentinel landscape.

Michelle, if you could go to the slide that shows the map. If you look on this map, you'll see the hatched area where it's green. That's the designated landscape. Actually, I'm sorry, the purple outline. That's the designated landscape. And if you look around the outsides, you'll see the blue -- big blue blobs. That's DoD land. Those are five of our military installations here in the Mojave Desert. It's China Lake Edwards, Barstow, fort Erwin and combat center. We're coming together with our public land managers, BLM for instance, and then also the State of California, and we're proposing that we can all work together with our nongovernmental organizations as well to further the advancement of the recovery and sustainment of the Desert Tortoise.

I'm going to stop there really quick. Do I have any questions on that? I know that's a -- it's sort of a strange concept. There isn't really any examples I can give you out here in California. Do we have any general questions? So far, or you had I just continue?

>> Yes, is the -- is the project -- the Desert Tortoise project from [?] is that still going on?

>> ERIN ADAMS: It is and it will be part of the Sentinel landscape project. So one of the founding projects of our Sentinel landscape project is proposed to include the Desert Tortoise recovery and sustainment program, or the RASP. And the goals of the RASP are to really look at Desert Tortoise recovery and sustainment off the installation.

So we've really worked on Desert Tortoise sustainment and recovery on the installation for decades. We have some incredible conservation lands, some restricted areas that have really high-quality Desert Tortoise populations. And now we're moving out and furthering the recovery and sustainment program off installation and partnering with BLM to further that -- further those goals.

And you can see, I think I might have the RASP on that -- let me look real quick here if I can grab the map here. All right. So if you -- the RASP footprint or focal areas really overlap between Edwards, fort Erwin, and the combat center, and even there's some focal areas up by China Lake where we work with BLM and the State of California with the Department of Transportation on things like trail recovery, tortoise fencing, and things like that. Did that answer your question?

>> [Away from mic].

>> ERIN ADAMS: Thank you. Awesome. So ultimately, the goals, and Michelle would you mind going to the goals slide? The goals and objectives, so really ultimately we're looking to recover the Desert Tortoise. When all of the agencies got together, so -- and there's a lot of them. It's USDA, NRCS, BLM, the military installations that I mentioned earlier, California natural resource agency, and multiple other agencies when we all got together and looked at what we were trying to accomplish, really everybody went back to the Desert Tortoise. This -- this -- the recovery of this species is critical to all of our missions. To help alleviate things such as impacts on military mission. Endangered species do have an impact on military mission, and our ability to train as we fight here in the desert. And prepare Marines, sailors and soldiers for deployment. It also impacts recreation. And other -- other state goals and federal goals like renewable energy development.

So the recovery of the species is important to everybody. So how we do that is through planning, and really looking at multiuse and how can we all come together, recover this species, while also furthering the goals of each of our individual missions. This is a really strange topic in terms of, you know, it's grand, it's a little bit esoteric, it has no money attached to it specifically, but what it does have is partnership and coalition. And it brings everybody together to work together for common goals. Because this designation would be at the federal level, what this would do for everybody is it would elevate our status for future funding opportunities.

So for instance, right now there are 11 other designated Sentinel landscapes across the United States. The majority of them are on the East Coast. But to date, just in the last ten years, nearly \$200 million worth of DoD funds had gone into Sentinel landscape projects. \$300 million from farm build at USDA projects. 70 million from the Department of Interior. 300 million from state funds. And about \$140 million from private funds have gone into Sentinel landscapes. So these designations have proven over last ten years to be a great facilitator for getting things done. And we're really excited about the future of this designation.

So the current status is that we've submitted what we call the expression of interest. Our lead agency is the CNRA. They've submitted our expression of interest to the federal agencies that I just described. Interior, ag, and DoD. The committee at the secretariat level is reviewing the projects now. And then they will let us know if we've been selected to further propose a designated landscape. At that point, we will do a full proposal. And we will pull together all of the agencies I've mentioned up to this point, but at that point we will also pull in our nongovernmental agencies. Our conservation agencies and partners. And also even for-profit partners to help us build a proposal that has a solid end state and reachable goals. That will be due around Christmas time, I'd say around December, and then by early spring the federal agencies that I mentioned before, the deciding committee, will decide if we've been chosen and designated as a formal Sentinel landscape. At that point they'll provide with us a Sentinel landscape coordinator which will help to us build out the projects, those joint projects where we can better cost share and work together to reach our goals and objectives of the Sentinel landscape partnership.

So I think that in a nutshell talks about what we're --what we're doing, what our goals are. The partnership is really strong in terms of communication, the communication to this point has been really solid. And I have a lot of hope in what we'll accomplish if we are designated. And with that, what I'm going to do is stop talking and turn it back to you guys and let me know if you have any questions or any thoughts or ideas to make this even better.

>> Yes, ma'am, contact information.

>> ERIN ADAMS: Absolutely. Yes. So my contact information is Erin, e-r-i-n,.Adams@usc.mil. It's a little bit easier than tortoise tracks, but.

>> Again, please.

>> MICHELLE VAN DER LINDEN: I can get it for you.

>> Thank you, Michelle.

>> I have a question too. So is it just with -- there's three species of Desert Tortoise, the Sonoran, the desert and then the Mojave one. Are you covering all three species or just Mojave Desert Tortoise?

>> ERIN ADAMS: Yeah, it's the one that's in that footprint on the map. So the one there in the high desert. So the -- [?] I probably said that wrong but it is the Mojave Desert one. Yeah.

>> Thank you.

>> ERIN ADAMS: Yeah, absolutely. Great question.

>> RANDY BANIS: So this is Randy Banis. What kind of projects do you envision that would be connected with these funds?

>> ERIN ADAMS: Oh, man, I love that question. Thank you so much. So the first -- so I'll just go down -- these still need to be hammered out in the full proposal. But I'm going to go over a few projects that are currently being drafted out to be included in the proposal. So these are rough drafts, so forgive me. But these are a good example for you. So one of the top threats to Desert Tortoise are mortalities from vehicle strikes. So we're looking to install a lot of Desert Tortoise fencing around roads that have high volume of traffic. So you'll see that. Also looking at working closely with BLM to help them WEMO and close unauthorized OHV routes. And then the vertical mulching to help reestablish that habitat around those unauthorized OHV routes. We're also looking restore a lot of acres of habitat in that footprint, so we'll identify the areas that need the most work. And then we'll work with partners like a good example would be MDLT and the work they've done restoring habitat. And we're looking at a lot of acreage, so we're talking like a couple hundred thousand acres of restored habitat under this project.

Another idea would be bulk seed production for supporting that habitat restoration. But also supporting the seed bank effort. We do see climate threats and -- and climate change impacting our species and its habitat. This is a critical element in ensuring the species is -- is really looking at bulk seed production, but also seed banking. And we work very closely with USDA and RCS on that, but also some conservation partners that have really furthered the effort, again, like MDLT.

Another great example would be community outreach and putting together a public outreach plan to assist all federal agencies, state agencies, and nongovernmental partners with education and also how they can help. So those are the -- right now what we're working on. If anybody has any other great ideas, I'm all ears.

>> Yes.

>> ERINS ADAMS: Did that answer your question, sir?

>> That's a good start. Thank you.

>> Yes, I have a question. You know the orange river valley is also the western way for all of our migratory birds, many of our migratory birds. So is this specific to the Desert Tortoise or -- and I know they control the airspace during migration during Edwards and China Lake down the orange river valley. So I wonder if that's going to lead into this, into the preservation of all of those other species or have any impact on those, or this is completely wholly for the tortoise?

>> ERIN ADAMS: That is -- my goodness, you nailed it on the head. That is a fantastic question, and that this is one thing that we went back and forth with the coordinating committee. The big three

secretariat level folks. How do we approach this in a way that, one, has a likelihood of getting designated? And two, is effective. And they came back and said, you need to focus on a specific species and their habitat or specific goal. Now however, sir, and I say this, and this was literally written in your expression of interest, and I'm going to read it to you. More than 40 sensitive plants and species will benefit from our collective action to include the western Joshua Tree, bighorn sheep, Indian California toe we, the ground squirrel, and our migratory birds and variety of pollinator species. While the intent and the mission of the designation will focus on the Mojave Desert tortoise, the benefit and the projects will incorporate a much greater landscape. Because you can't see a landscape without seeing everything. And you can't affect one thing without, you know, ripple effects and indirect effects on others.

>> ROBERT ROBINSON: I have a question. [Away from mic] include the usual [away from mic] for the tortoises? Tortoises have a one track mind, like want to go a direction or go someplace or they get removed to someplace they always want to go back there. They go up and down that fence and [away from mic] finally find a place go. And if there's no reasonable access on the other side of the road, trail, whatever it is [away from mic]. And the fence is only half the answer.

>> ERIN ADAMS: Oh, I -- so I'm going -- this is one reason I hate Zoom. I honestly could not make out that question. Could someone repeat that for me?

>> RANDY BANIS: I'll see if I can encapsulate it. So he's asking -- the question is, are there pass-through areas for the tortoise to get beyond the fencing as the tortoise will continue to pace back and forth along the fence line until they can find a way to get to the other side.

>> ERIN ADAMS: Oh, yeah. Yeah. So -- so great question.

>> In a reasonable intervals for crossing.

>> ERIN ADAMS: Yeah, thank you for that very much. We've actually -- one of the other -- and I didn't include this topic because it's really still in the -- in the pre -- I don't know what you would call it, the idea phase. But we're looking at wildlife corridor passovers that go over roadways in intervals to allow wildlife crossings that are less dangerous than crossing the actual road. But to your specific point, very well noted here. I agree with you. And when we put together the plans, these are more or less concepts at this point. We will have what we call an implementation plan for each project that will incorporate those topics and those concerns into the planning process.

So absolutely, sir, those -- those questions are valid and will be addressed when we put together the plan. I can't speak to them right now because they just aren't flushed out enough to be able to answer you directly in terms of what will happen. But it will be addressed.

>> The question with [away from mic] valley, the proposed Sentinel landscape does not go far enough north to cover Owens valley, but there are future projects that may be coming forward. Hopefully with the 2026 applications that will include Owens valley.

>> ERIN ADAMS: Thank you, John. Yeah, so I -- I just want to tag on, John makes great points there. Everything you see here today is a pre-proposal. Which means even the boundaries of the Sentinel landscape will be refined as we move closer to the proposal-- the full proposal. As projects evolve, as our knowledge and working with partners progresses, the subjective landscape, its goals, its

purpose, will refine. Input from you, input from our federal partners, our state partners is critical to making this actually effective in the end. So yeah, I'm excited about it.

>> I'm sorry, somebody have a question?

>> NATHAN FRANCIS: I had just a quick one. Erin, my name's Nathan Francis and I'm with the [away from mic] and we have a conservation area that's just north of Edwards in the highway 58. And we'll probably be interested in also participating.

>> ERIN ADAMS: That makes me very happy. And you are on my list to reach out, so I appreciate you being there and -- and speaking up, because stand by, we'll be in touch.

>> [Away from mic] mentioned a bit about the crossings. [Away from mic] I know working with [away from mic] and Caltrans to be install three crossings on the [away from mic] corridor. I think the western most crossing is probably just on the edge or inside the Sentinel landscape right now. They're looking to try [away from mic]. Still working on that. But they're working hard just to accomplish this as quick as possible.

>> That's great news. Thank you. Thank you for sharing that.

>> Erin, is there any --

>> Yes.

>> Is the Desert Tortoise preserve committee one of your points of contact?

>> ERIN ADAMS: They are on my list to contact. If we are selected and chosen to move forward with the full proposal, they are on my list to incorporate into the larger partnership. But keep those -- if you guys don't mind, as you think of agencies or groups or organizations that you think should be a part of this, you have my email, please send me a note. Because I have a pretty good comprehensive list, but I don't want to leave anybody out that shouldn't -- that should be a part of it. And we're all human and it would be -- it would be an inadvertent overlook, but I absolutely want to make sure I have everybody.

>> I'll gladly volunteer to be Erin's POC for here if anyone needs it. If you can contact me over at China Lake, I've got business cards if anyone needs it.

>> Thank you, John.

>> Referring else sort of seems limitless. I know I'm having a hard time putting a rope around this.

>> That's a challenge.

>> That's a good point, Randy.

>> So all of the above.

>> SHELLY LYNCH: This does move forward, it doesn't change land use and it doesn't change any land use plans. So I just want to make sure that that's clear to folks. That it doesn't make any of those changes. All that land management and the land use management plans all stay the same.

>> ERIN ADAMS: Thank you, Shelly, very much. Yes, so this isn't about -- this is about working together under our current scopes and mission and just looking for that overlap where we can help each other out, versus -- we're not looking to change anything mission, like the DRECP, the Marine Corps biological opinions, the integrated natural resource plans, our programmatic agreements, all of that stays the same. It's just a matter of trying to find those -- that synergy between the agencies where we can work together to further our own already identified missions.

>> It would be more like an economic synergy?

>> ERIN ADAMS: It could be, yeah. I like to think of it that way just because -- so if you look at -- if you look at -- so -- so a little secret. If you look at the amount of money that DoD has spent on the ESA, the Endangered Species Act and threatened and endangered species, it's a lot. It is a lot. We -- we put a lot of investment in managing species. In fact, at some point I'm not sure if it's still true, but a few years ago I read a static that said that the DoD had invested more money into endangered species management than all other federal agencies combined. So it's a lot of money. And we've looked at cost sharing in other projects, like our REPI program.

REPI is the readiness and environmental protection initiative. It is where we come together and we work with land trusts and other agencies to purchase land for conservation in hopes that it would protect against encroachment on the military mission. And we partner with that, and that's a lot of cost sharing. We found that we can further our mission if we get partners. So this is sort of, you know, born from the REPI program and looking at -- looking beyond the REPI program. How can we partner better with our sister agencies, with the state, with local agencies, and even nonprofit and private partnerships. So I think -- I think I've run out of material for you all. Should we call it quits for now and if you guys have any questions for me, follow-up, John can get you my email or Michelle. And I'd love to follow up or chat with you. Otherwise, we're still in limbo to see if we've been invited to next part of the process.

>> That timeline as you see it is?

>> ERIN ADAMS: We don't have hard dates. I've been given generalizations for times. But the expression of interest was submitted on July 27th by the secretary of natural resources, California secretary of natural resources on behalf of the military installations, BLM, and NRCS. That is now sitting at the federal coordinating committee at the secretariat level for DoD, DOI, and USDA. They'll decide if we're invited to the next proposal cycle. Which will be duty end of the calendar year. So probably before -- I would say end of December. At this point, we're in the last round for -- for selection. If we are chosen, it will be announced in early spring.

>> RANDY BANIS: Thank you. Thank you. DAC members, any questions, comments? Thank you, Erin. I think we're clear on that. Appreciate it.

>> ERIN ADAMS: I really -- yeah, thanks for -- thanks for giving me a few minutes to talk about it and good luck with the rest of your meeting. I enjoyed being here.

>> RANDY BANIS: Thank you. So we -- we remain still on time. Wow. Let's -- we do have a break scheduled. Let's take a break. We'll come back at 3:00 and we'll wrap up the meeting. Thanks, everybody. See you in 15 minutes.

[Break].

>> RANDY BANIS: Ladies and Gentlemen, we're about to begin. We're about to begin our last phase of the meeting. Thanks for coming back and for this last round. We still have enough energy, we're going to -- we're going to make the last round the biggest round. So what we do now is this is the part of the agenda where we turn it over to the DAC Desert Advisory Council members. This is where I solicit items to consider for the future meetings. As I understand, is it -- can I mention the next upcoming date that I've heard from a little bird on my shoulder? Little blue bird. We're looking at December 1st and 2nd for the next Desert Advisory Council meeting.

>> MICHELLE VAN DER LINDEN: Sorry, it's December 8th and 9th.

>> RANDY BANIS: Eighth and 9th, the second weekend, second week. It's fairly traditional that the Desert Advisory Council meets either on that first or second weekend of December. So this one will be the second weekend in December. Do we have a guess of where that might be?

>> MICHELLE VAN DER LINDEN: It's being hosted by the Palm Springs field office.

>> RANDY BANIS: Wow. Uh, you're going to be gone by then.

>> TIM GILLOON: Sorry. [Laughter] moving up a little bit.

>> RANDY BANIS: I pity the new guy, or girl. I pity them. Okay. No, they'll hold a great -- a great meeting for us, I'm sure. It will be great to be in Palm Springs during the month of December. That's the time you want to visit. Beautiful. Great time to recreate and go on field trips and see the sites in that area. You know, it always brings back memories of the time that Palm Springs South Coast hosted a DAC meeting in Redondo beach at the rad at the Radisson. So that was probably one of the most unique and interesting meetings that we've ever had. That was really neat. So with that, turning the floor over to DAC members, are there any specific topics that would be timely for us to be discussing in that second week of December?

>> PAUL MARTIN: Something that I think might be relevant at least on the [away from mic] Palm Springs, I'm sure a lot of people are familiar with the 10 freeway corridor and the amount of [away from mic] that's been put in place along that corridor. In accordance with the [away from mic] there's a designated area where a solar project could be fast tracked, essentially preapproves them. Surrounding areas have a lot of designations and protections. Maybe we could get [away from mic] or clarification as to what kind of protections did the ERCP afford the surrounding areas? There are a lot of wonderful wilderness areas, recreational opportunities and I think with some of the future ideas being proposed for that idea, maybe.

>> RANDY BANIS: There's some misconceptions about what kind of protections are offered to those areas. Would it be -- be timely to fold it into a DRECP update?

>> HANS HAAS: I think that would be beneficial also for newer members like me who are trying to absorb this world of acronyms seeing all the different plans on top of plans and what trumps what and how these plans are being managed, especially when certain groups are telling you things like, you know, solar's going to pay for all hillsides and mountaintops. But when I read it, I get a different understanding. Maybe we could hear from someone who really knows, what is the situation there.

>> RANDY BANIS: And who knows, maybe one day DRCP will just be called the desert plan again. Because it kind of really is, right? It's just a giant amendment for one day. Hi, Bob.

>> ROBERT ROBINSON: Hi. I think a subject that would be good was an update that might know more about what's going to be happening with the 50-mile pipeline. Cal City [away from mic] the Indian Wells Valley [away from mic].

>> That's -- is that currently in a comment period?

>> ROBERT ROBINSON: Yes. And they'll have the probably more information by December whether it's going to be the EIS, EIR and, you know, whether it's going to be in the EA or the EIS. So that was the subject [away from mic]. What exactly the -- like I was never -- I was never notified of anything [away from mic] all the other tribes were notified about it. And that's not a good sign. And there's [away from mic] I wouldn't have known about the meeting the other night if it wouldn't have been [away from mic] but I think [away from mic] all those things and make sure they do what they're supposed to do.

>> RANDY BANIS: Thank you. Dick.

>> DICK HOLLIDAY: With all of our talk about solar, I still would like to -- I would like to see if we could get a representative from the independent operators to explain to us their procedures for energy interchange and their procedures for curtailing solar. They're curtailing solar and a lot of solar and a lot of wind farm solar energy because we have so much in California. And I would like -- I like to understand a little bit more what their procedures are for curtailing solar and how all these new plans affect them as far as managing the energy supply in California.

And also from just learning from Greg there about this proposed Chuckwalla National Monument that would take up the rest of the desert, I wonder wondered, I never heard of that where we learn about these things other than as an Desert Advisory Council.

>> RANDY BANIS: Yeah, yeah, that one sort of -- that's up to the proponents to come out of their closet. There's a lot of -- a lot of talk in the -- in the underground world about this. But it hasn't reached the surface yet. Maybe -- maybe by then or at some point somebody will be ready to fill us -- to fill us in. I will say that area sure has a lot of -- expect to hear from the rockhounds again, let's just put it that way. [Laughter]. If you like having rockhounds coming to our meeting, then, yeah.

>> DICK HOLLIDAY: I think Greg is concerned there about the mining, that's the part of rock hounding there is. They're mining, they're going out there rock hunting for things that are really expensive, by the pound.

>> Yeah. He doesn't have a lot of bling on for -- he doesn't have that much bling. Must not be very successful, is that it?

>> I could say that [away from mic] mining, going for the nugget [away from mic] is the mother of gold. There is an iron deposit right next door to the [away from mic].

>> So he's on to something?

>> Yeah, that's a big iron.

>> You just told about -- you just told us about your favorite fishing hole, something you're never supposed to do.

>> Redact my comment there.

>> RANDY BANIS: That's neat. Other questions or ideas? Hi, Jennifer.

>> JENNIFER HENNING: Hello. I would like to make a clarification on getting an update on the sand and snow national monument. I've been hearing the Palm Springs report and also get be public comment Arica with the PCT to be part of that [away from mic] and provide any comments. I'd like to hear more about that, where it's at and just how people are being select and brought on to [away from mic].

>> RANDY BANIS: They are just starting the planning process, so it would be good to get in on the ground floor. That would be great. Thank you. Other ideas? I think that's a handful to look at. And it wouldn't surprise me if there's still notes from previous meetings about possible topics as well. So I think we've done -- I think we've got a lot to choose from. Very good. With that, I'm going to open up the floor to Council Members to provide some closing remarks, closing thoughts, ideas about today's meeting and the field trip. Does anybody have anything that they'd like to share before we call it a day?

>> One thing I'd like to mention, it's something I've heard all three of the [away from mic] is how important these are to the public. While at the same time we're looking at a challenge in keeping the DAC [away from mic] and how slow the process has been and trying to work through that. There was even talk at one point going completely virtual or whether we could have a meeting if we had too few Council Members available, whatnot. I just want to say that I'm of the opinion that I really don't care if it's two DAC members, I think we need to have these. I think they need to be public, and I think we need to make a point to meet the need of, you know, whether it's three meetings a year or four is what would be needed. [Away from mic] the idea of using field offices of districts that are not hosting the meeting as a potential gathering place for people to virtually view it. Maybe that could be a more streamlined way for the public to engage and be part of the DAC process. I think all those are great ideas, but the thing I've heard over and over at each meeting is just how important this is to the public. So I don't know if that's bearing in mind.

>> RANDY BANIS: It sure is. It sure is. Anyone else? Dick.

>> DICK HOLLIDAY: Thanks for everybody in [away from mic] hosting us and having a great field trip. But I also think that it's very important to have these meetings in person. I think people -- if you signed up for the DAC, you're signed up -- you signed up for the DAC. You didn't sign up to sit at home and watch TV. And I don't like Zoom meetings for anything. But I've been to enough Zoom meetings and so I think, too, and I know the problem is it's a pain for the BLM, I'm sure, but they always -- they always seem to come through. So I just would like to reiterate that. It wouldn't bother me at all if they just didn't even have Zoom meetings. I'm sure it helps some people to -- that can't get here, public people. But I think the DAC members ought to be there.

>> RANDY BANIS: I agree with that. I think in-person meetings have a lot more effect and I think Congress when they authorized this, they had in mind in-person meetings where the public could come meet face-to-face with BLM and express whatever, you know, whatever they wished to express. I think that, for me, I can't do Zoom meetings because I've got a satellite dish and I'm waiting the whole meeting for it to load and I use up all my data.

>> Yep, yep.

>> So everyone has [away from mic].

>> RANDY BANIS: I think they're chastising me for having phoned in on Zoom the last meeting.

>> I think so.

>> Yeah. I think that might be it. Yeah. No, I hear that loud and clear.

>> And thank you for hosting us.

>> RANDY BANIS: I heard one thing that -- this weekend that stuck in my craw. We're losing a member of the DAC extended family, Tim. It's been awesome having you on board. And when you -- when you come on you were the new guy. And it doesn't take long before you have others backfilling behind you. But it's really been a pleasure meeting you and working with you on the issues and projects. Sorry that we won't see you at the DAC meeting in Palm Springs. But I know that things like this are onward, forward, bigger and better and I at least on my heart and hopefully with the rest of the DAC members we very much wish you the most success and to your family hope you enjoy your new home and your new job. And give 'em hell.

>> TIM GILLOON: Thank you, I appreciate it. I'll just say honestly this has been [away from mic] I missed a couple of DACs because of military. But this has been the best job I've ever had and it's working with the public [away from mic] landscapes, I'm going to miss it.

>> Thank you, we'll miss you. Very good.

>> You're going to be with us, Mike, for one more meeting, right?

>> Yeah.

>> RANDY BANIS: He still maybe will change his mind. We're working on it. [Laughter]. No one likes a quitter. Well, we'll get to that one another day. Don't look too far into the sun. Is there any other comments from our DAC members? I think it would be opportunity for us to adjourn the meeting maybe 15 minutes early, unless you have some thoughts or announcements.

>> Perhaps Shelly might have something.

>> That's right. Are you ready to --

>> Shelly might be frozen. Shelly, can you hear us?

>> SHELLY LYNCH: I missed that, I'm sorry.

>> MICHELLE VAN DER LINDEN: Randy was about to close the meeting and I thought maybe you had some closing comments?

>> SHELLY LYNCH: Yeah, just want to thank everybody. Especially Ridgecrest for hosting the meeting and my apologies for not being able to be there in person. I really enjoy the in-person interaction as well but my plans didn't work out this time. But thank you, everybody for attending and Ridgecrest for hosting. We'll see you on December 8th and 9th for the next one.

>> Bye, Shelly.