



U.S. Department of the Interior  
Bureau of Land Management

## Central California (CenCal) Resource Advisory Council (RAC) Meeting Minutes

Held at the Fairfield Inn Santa Cruz, CA  
Thursday, February 29, 2024, 8:30 a.m. – 1:30 p.m.

### ATTENDEES

**RAC:** Joe Ashley, Mary Boblet, Laurie Collom, Chris Friedel, Matt Kingsley, Michael Lueders, Reb Monaco, Nancy Muleady-Mecham, Andre Sanchez, and Bob Schneider.

**BLM:** Gordon Toevs, Acting State Director, Chris Heppe, District Manager; Philip Oviatt, District Public Affairs Officer; David Brinsfield, District Fire Chief; Gabe Garcia, Bakersfield Field Manager; Zachary Ormsby, Central Coast Field Manager; Jeff Horn, Mother Lode Field Manager; Nick Lavrov, Ukiah Field Manager; Sherri Lisius, Bishop Field Manager; Ben Hoke, Central Coast Assistant Field Manager; Philip Gross, Bishop Assistant Field Manager; Michelle Van Der Linden, CDD Public Affairs Officer; Elizabeth Barry, BLM CA Ethics.

**FS:** Aaron Coogan, Janelle Smith, Jose Hernandez, Courtney Miller, Todd Harbin, Sam Snider, Liza Honorio, Joanna Wilson, Randy Kyes, Evan Topal, Judith Salazar, Ilia Fiene, Casey Jardine, Todd Newburger, Amanda Loye, Sarah Belcher, Elizabeth Macphail, and Beth Martinez.

**Public and Registered Attendees:** Jim Phelan, Bruce Brazil, Chris Shull, Danny Wind, Nina Groeneveld, Joe Schmoe.

### OPENING

#### Welcome and Introductions:

Chris Heppe opened the meeting at 8:30 a.m. with a welcome to all the RAC members in attendance. Philip Oviatt led round table introductions of in-person and online attendees. Gordon Toevs also welcomed attendees and thanked the RAC for their contributions. He gave an overview of the state office highlighting personnel changes. He addressed the current situation in Congress as it relates to BLM and a potential shutdown. He talked about native seed production and other work being done to battle climate change. Gordon mentioned the new Blueprint for the 21<sup>st</sup> Century Outdoor Recreational plan and efforts underway to see that program implemented. He discussed the Inflation Reduction Act and Bipartisan Infrastructure Law funds being utilized within the district and particularly in the efforts to clean up abandoned wells in California. He highlighted statewide fuels treatment activities with over 25,000 acres treated, efforts to collaborate with the Forest Service, and protection for communities in the wildland urban interface. He mentioned the Bi-State Sage Grouse program accomplishments in California and Nevada. He thanked staff for his recent trip to Cotoni-Coast Dairies.

## GENERAL BUSINESS

RAC Chair, Matt Kingsley asked if anyone had questions about the RAC Meeting Minutes from the September 2023 RAC meeting. Bob Schneider had a question about the rec.gov program software. After much discussion, Matt moved to table the minutes until staff could address the question and directed staff to add September 2023 minutes to the agenda for May 2024.

\*After clarifying Bob Schneider's question regarding Rec.gov, staff received clarification from Janelle Smith, Strategic Communications Lead with Recreation One Stop, Recreation.gov, USDA Forest Service on March 12. Janelle noted that the contractor designs, builds, maintains, improves, updates, and owns the technology, or software behind Recreation.gov. The government owns the data, the domain, call center number, and logo.

She further explained that this is how the contract was set up, which meets the highest levels of all government standards for FISMA, the E-government act, the Privacy Act, FEDRamp, and PCI-DSS.

## RAC BRIEFINGS

### **Central Coast Presentation on Cotoni-Coast Dairies (C-CD):**

Central Coast FM Zachary Ormsby gave an overview of the field tour from the previous day. He thanked the State Director for his efforts helping to get C-CD opened. He spoke about how C-CD fits into the overall management of the California Coastal National Monument. He acknowledged all the dedicated staff that have been working on all levels of this project. Zachary led a narrative on the pending Environmental Assessment (EA) for the property and for the parking area that was toured the day before. He concluded his presentation by asking for the RAC support for the EA as individuals or as a group when it is published.

### **RAC DISCUSSION and ACTION:**

Matt Kingsley led a Q and A on the presentation with RAC members.

**Matt Kingsley** began the discussion by asking if the RAC would want to draft a joint letter of support for the EA.

**Reb Monaco** stated that he sees the need for the parking area. He would be supportive of a letter.

**Laurie Collom** stated that she supports the need for the parking lot. She said she would be willing to write the letter.

**Chris Friedel** supports the need for a parking lot. He is looking forward to reading the EA. He asked if a joint letter or an individual letter be more helpful. Chris Heppe stated that a single letter with RAC signatures would be tremendously beneficial.

**Nancy Muleady-Mecham** supports efforts and parking area. She asked staff how the property is going to open to the public. Zachary stated that they have supplementary rules in place to open the monument with or without the parking lot. He spoke of working with partners and community organizers to open the monument to the public.

**Matt** supports the bathroom and parking. He stated that he understands the frustrations with the length of time it has taken to get the property open to that public.

**Bob Schneider** thanked staff for all the efforts and their focus on ADA trails along with the

many groups involved with the process. He stated he would like to see the EA before making any comments but was generally in favor of the project.

**Michael Lueders** thanked staff for all their efforts and he stated that he is in support of the parking lot.

**Mary Boblet** liked all the financial support that has come in for the project. She made comments in support of adaptive trails and citizen science. She asked about a water source at the bathroom. Zachary talked about the multi-agency plan to address needs for the public that included water.

**Andre Sanchez** stated that he enjoyed the field trip. He is looking forward to seeing the EA. He cautioned that he might not be able to sign a full letter of support because of his organizational affiliations, but he will wait to see the EA and a letter if one is written.

**Joe Ashley** thanked Zachary for all the coordination efforts. He supports a RAC letter of support.

**Reb** asked about the RACs ability to send a letter of support.

**Bob** asked if there was a need for the RAC to vote to support the letter.

**Matt** addressed both by stating that the RAC has a consensus of support, pending the reading of the EA. He said that a letter could be written and offered to members to sign if they so choose.

**Reb** agreed with that and made a motion to authorize RAC member Laurie Collom to draft a letter of support upon reading the EA. Said letter will be circulated amongst RAC for input and concurrence prior to the public comment period coming to an end. Laurie seconded the motion. The vote in favor was unanimous.

#### **Forest Service Presentation on Federal Lands Recreation Enhancement Act:**

**WO National Recreation Fee Program Specialist Amanda Loye** lead an overview discussion on the forest service presentations. She highlighted that when changing fees at Forest Service units, the agency works to ensure that the amount of a recreation fee is commensurate with the benefits and services provided to visitors. In addition, when setting fees, the Forest Service considers fees or comparable facilities and services in comparable settings charged elsewhere by the Forest Service, other public agencies, and nearby private operators. She emphasized that an important part of their efforts is also obtaining input from the public as well as a Resource Advisory Council. She explained the differences between Standard Amenity Fees, Expanded Amenity Fees, and Special Recreation Permit Fees. She presented on recreation fee proposal requirements: new fees, changing fees, changing passes, eliminating fees, expanding/limiting of a fee program. She discussed how the fees in the proposals are used as well as public involvement and the role of the RAC in Forest Service proposals.

#### **RAC DISCUSSION and ACTION:**

Although no ACTION was needed on the presentation, Matt Kingsley led a Q and A on the presentation with RAC members.

**Bob Schneider** asked if the Rec.gov was causing the public to pay more. Todd Harbin from the Forest Service explained how fees are set and where they are used.

**Laurie Collom** stated that at previous RAC meetings it was stated that we should not be in the business to make money. Todd made the distinction between reservation fees and recreation fees.

**Nancy Muleady-Mecham** asked about the Forest Service ability to control fees being charged by rec.gov. Todd stated that they do have control to make changes to the recreation fees being charged, but the reservation fee is set per contract. Jannelle Smith of rec.gov clarified further between reservations fees vs recreation fees.

**Matt Kingsley and Nancy** asked for clarification on a statistical error in the presentation compared to the info packet the RAC received. Amanda explained the clarification and

Matt advised to have those corrected for future presentations.

**Humboldt-Toiyabe (HT) National Forest Wilderness SRP Permit Fee Increase Proposal for Overnight Use of the Hoover Wilderness Presentation:**

**Recreation Management Specialist Elizabeth Macphail** gave an overview of the Hoover Wilderness Fee Proposal and the purpose of bringing the draft to the RAC for input. She highlighted that the increased fee would provide the HT with additional capacities to help maintain and improve the wilderness character of the Hoover Wilderness and provide for improved user experience and safety. She discussed the seven trailhead locations that would be impacted by the fee proposal. She outlined the differences between the current fee structure, the original fee change proposal, and the current fee change proposal after receiving public input. The proposal before the RAC is an \$8 fee per person for the duration of the trip, children twelve years of age and under are free, and no fee required for day-use. She concluded her presentation with an outlook on how the funds would be utilized within the Hoover Wilderness.

**RAC DISCUSSION and ACTION:**

Matt Kingsley led a Q and A on the presentation with RAC members.

**Matt Kingsley** stated that the increases looked good but stated that the funds raised would probably not cover all the needs for the area. He is generally supportive with the fee increase.

**Andre Sanchez** said he would like to see the cap higher in the future. He stated that the proposed fee seems adequate.

**Mary Boblet** stated she is supportive of the recommended fees.

**Michael Lueders** said he was supportive, but he feels the fees are below what is needed to generate the necessary funds to get the work completed.

**Reb Monaco** stated that he was generally supportive of the fee increase.

**Bob Schneider** asked if the FS had received any America the Beautiful funds that could be used in this area. Elizabeth stated that they did apply, but did not receive any of the grants they applied for. Bob asked about using volunteers. Elizabeth listed several organizations that the FS partners with for volunteer work. Bob stated that he was generally supportive.

**Nancy Muleady-Mecham** asked if there was a way for “walk-ups” to pay. Elizabeth stated that no iron rangers are in place at this time.

**Chris Friedel** was generally supportive but would like to see the cap at 10 instead of 12.

**Laurie Collom** stated that she is supportive of the increase as the needs to maintain the areas have grown.

**Joe Ashley** stated that things cost money. With no fee increases since the 1990s, he is supportive of the increase to help bring the area current.

**Bruce Brazil (member of the public)** stated that as organizations increase fees, groups that obtain permits must incorporate those costs into their permits.

**Matt Kingsley** asked for a motion. **Bob Schneider** made the motion to support the fee increase as written and proposed. **Michael Lueders** seconded the motion. **Matt Kingsley** called for a vote; the proposal passed unanimously.

**Stanislaus National Forest Recreation Fee Proposal Presentation:**

**Deputy Forest Supervisor Beth Martinez and Public Services Officer Casey Jardine** introduced four fee proposals for the Stanislaus NF: Campgrounds, Day-Use Sites, Tuolumne River permits, and Christmas Tree permits. Their discussion highlighted

twenty-six campground proposals, three day-use sites, one river permit site, and implementation of Christmas Tree permits. Beth and Casey lead a detailed discussion of each campground site and the proposed fee for each site. They proposed a three-year phased in approach for each of the proposed \$20, \$25, \$30, and \$35 campground fees depending on site location. A single \$5 fee increase was proposed for the three day-use sites and a single \$20 fee increase was proposed for a Christmas Tree permit. They concluded their presentation by highlighting twelve “Fee Free Days” for the Stanislaus NF recreation sites.

**RAC DISCUSSION and ACTION:**

Matt Kingsley led a Q and A on the presentation with RAC members.

**Andre Sanchez** is supportive of the gradual campground increases. He would support the Day-Use proposal if a gradual approach was utilized. He supports the river permit proposal. He will only support the Christmas Tree permit proposal if it is implemented as a gradual approach, suggesting \$10 in year one then increasing gradually over three years.

**Mary Boblet** stated she was supportive of the campground and day-use fee increases as well as the Christmas Tree permit proposal.

**Michael Lueders** was supportive of all four proposals as long as the FS utilized a tiered approach for all four proposals.

**Reb Monaco** stated he was supportive of the four proposals.

**Bob Schneider** was generally supportive of the four proposals.

**Matt Kingsley** stated that he was supportive of the campground, day-use, and river permit proposals. However, he felt that \$20 per tree was too high. He suggested that public be able to take two or three trees for \$20.

**Nancy Muleady-Mecham** was in favor of the campground, day-use, and river permit proposals, but she wanted to see a tiered approach taken for the Christmas Tree permit proposal.

**Chris Friedel** was generally supportive of all four program proposals.

**Laurie Collom** stated she was in support of the four proposals.

**Joe Ashley** said he supports all the work being done and he supports the four proposals.

**Jim Phelan (member of the public)** asked if these proposals had been brought before the Tuolumne Natural Resource Committee. Beth Martinez stated she did not know if Tuolumne had been part of their outreach.

**Matt Kingsley** asked for motions on the four proposals.

**Michael Lueders** made the motion to approve the campground fee increases as written and proposed. **Laurie Collom** seconded the motion. **Matt Kingsley** called for a vote; the proposal passed unanimously.

**Michael Lueders** made the motion to support the Christmas Tree permit fee proposal with the recommendation to implement a tiered increase. **Reb Monaco** seconded the motion.

**Matt Kingsley** called for a vote; the proposal passed unanimously.

**Michael Lueders** made the motion to support the day-use site fee proposal with the recommendation to implement a tiered increase. **Chris Friedel** seconded the motion. **Matt Kingsley** called for a vote; the proposal passed unanimously.

**Reb Monaco** made the motion to support the Tuolumne River permit fee proposal as written and proposed. **Joe Ashley** seconded the motion. **Matt Kingsley** called for a vote; the proposal passed unanimously.

**BLM District/Field Office Projects Update Presentation:**

**\*Due to the lengthy discussions of agenda items and the impending inclement**

weather, Matt Kingsley tabled this item and instructed staff to include it on the May 2024 agenda.

**RAC DISCUSSION ITEMS:**

**\*Due to the lengthy discussions of agenda items and the impending inclement weather, Matt Kingsley tabled this item and instructed staff to include it on the May 2024 agenda.**

**PUBLIC COMMENT:**

Although no action can be taken on public comment. RAC members welcome input from the public for future consideration.

**Jim Phalen** addressed the need for fuel breaks on fuels programs occurring on BLM land. He asked for Chris Heppe and David Brinsfield to reach out to him regarding the programs. Chris indicated that he would reach out soon.

**Bruce Brazil** stated that there will be a CORVA meeting on April 20, 2024. The meeting needs a speaker from the BLM on OHV items in the Clear Creek Management Area. Zachary Ormsby stated that he would be happy to speak at the event. He will reach out to Bruce.

**NEXT MEETING**

Chris Heppe stated that the next in- person meeting for the RAC is scheduled for Wednesday May 8 and Thursday, May 9, 2024. The location will be Brooks, CA with a field trip to Berryessa Snow Mountain National Monument. The meeting will be a blended model of in-person and virtual to accommodate participant needs.

**MEETING ADJOURNED**

Matt Kingsley and Chris Heppe gave closing remarks, thanked everyone for attending, and adjourned the meeting at 1:45 p.m.