



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

Central California (CenCal) Resource Advisory Council (RAC)

Virtual Meeting Minutes

Thursday, May 8, 2025, 8:30 a.m. – 2:00 p.m.

ATTENDEES

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

BLM: Gabe Garcia, District Manager; Philip Oviatt, District Public Affairs Officer; Sarah Mathews, District Program Manager; John Hodge, Acting Bakersfield Field Manager; Neal Craig, Ukiah Field Manager; Philip Gross, Bishop Field Manager; Zachary Ormsby, Central Coast Field Manager; Ben Hoke, Central Coast Assistant Field Manager; Noah Triplett, Mother Lode Assistant Field Manager; Brian Novosak, Acting Central California Deputy District Manager; Jennifer Naster, Bakerfield Assistant Field Manager; Colin Davis, Ukiah Assistant Field Manager.

FS: Sarah Belcher, Travis Mason, Randy Kyes, Jonar Rodrigo, Andrew Kennedy, Winfred Wong, Julie Schneider, Andrew Madsen, Ilia Fiene, Sam Snider, Todd Harbin, Joanna Wilson, Justin Bruns, Amanda Loye, Lisa Cox, Courtney Miller, Karina Medina, Blanca Rosas, Michael Papa.

Public and Registered Attendees: Steven Nelson, Kurtis Alexander, Jora Fogg, Bryan Pride, Michael Karr

OPENING

Welcome and Introductions:

RAC Chair Matt Kingsley opened the meeting at 8:30 a.m. with a welcome to all the RAC members in attendance. CenCal District Manager Gabe Garcia welcomed the RAC members and introduced himself as the new Central California District Manager, taking over for Chris Heppe when Chris retired earlier this year. CenCal District Public Affairs Officer welcomed everyone to the meeting. All five field offices were present. He conveyed his appreciation for patience as this was the first RAC meeting held using the Microsoft TEAMS format. Oviatt provided additional clarification on how to operate the raise hand feature to be recognized and some discussion ensued about the chat feature availability, and it was confirmed that access to the chat would be limited after the meeting.

GENERAL BUSINESS

BLM State Director Report – Gabe Garcia

Matt Kingsley turned the time over to Gabe Garcia to present the **BLM California State**

Director Report. He stated that the BLM is currently going through some changes and is adapting to different priorities with changing administration. Highlights of his report out included:

Staffing reductions that you are hearing about are not affecting CenCal *too much*. We did lose folks through the deferred resignation and retirement process, including a few in our District. There is currently a hiring freeze through July. Fire, law enforcement and safety positions are exempted from hiring freeze. We are looking to fill some vacancies during the freeze, and we are working through that process. We have a new Department of Interior Secretary, Doug Burgum, former Gov of North Dakota and an acting BLM Director- John Raby, who is typically state director out of Nevada. He is acting until they fill the position.

Leadership changes here in Central California - I'm filling in behind Chris Heppe. Folks remember Rubin Leal, our deputy district manager for many years, retired. Brian Novosak is filling in behind Rubin as our deputy district manager, he is on a temporary assignment through July and then we will backfill or bring in another acting. We have a new field manager in Ukiah. Neal Craig is taking over after the departure of Nick Lavrov. Ukiah is a very busy but small office. Neal was an assistant field manager in the Bishop Field office for several years before moving up to Ukiah.

Statewide Fuels Treatment Projects In 2003, BLM California passed a programmatic environmental assessment to streamline fuels reductions or hazards fuels reductions projects throughout the state. Treated roughly 930,000 acres of public land in 44 different counties. Since 2024, we have used the programmatic assessment 12 times, ten in 2024 and two so far in 2025. Many of these projects are in that wildland urban interface right outside of communities. We had a busy fire season last summer and expecting another busy summer this year. Central California is the epicenter for a lot of fuels projects.

25th anniversary of our national conservation lands system. BLM is planning outreach events to celebrate different National Monuments, special designated lands put into place 20-25 years ago. Events at Carrizo Plain National Monument in September, which is tied to our Public Lands Day event. We will have the 10th anniversary celebration at the Berryessa Snow Mountain National Monument which is also tied to the 25th anniversary celebration in conjunction with Tribal partners in July. We are also looking to open Cotoni-Coast Dairies in Santa Cruz with a target date in August.

Oil and gas leasing program. Several Secretarial Orders and Executive Orders tied to energy/energy production have impacted priorities for us at the BLM. There is a review, nationally, to streamline oil and gas decisions and make projects more efficient. There is an emphasis on on-the-ground development with applications for permit to drill and our leasing program. The leasing program has been on and off over the last 10 years. Last lease sale was in 2020 and so we are upgrading our planning efforts/resource management plans in both Bakersfield and Central Coast to enable us to have lease sales once again. We currently have a Notice of Intent for two Supplemental Environmental Impact Statements in both the Bakersfield Field Office and the Central Coast Field Office coming out soon. The public comment period to scope the project with draft document will happen sometime this fall. BLM is at the forefront of energy production- in California, we produce roughly about 100,000 barrels a day from BLM leases amounting to approximately \$1,000,000 in revenue from the royalties off that production. There is a focus by the administration to make sure that we are operationally efficient and have lands available to be leased.

RAC Meeting Minutes and Schedule for 2025-2026

Matt Kingsley turned time over to Public Affairs Officer Philip Oviatt. Oviatt stated that we did not have a full quorum at the last meeting and thus the RAC had two meeting minutes notes to approve. The meeting minutes needing approval are for the May 2024 meeting and the September 2024 meeting. Matt asked if any discussion was needed for the May 2024 minutes. None was offered. Matt asked for a motion to approve the May 2024 meeting minutes. Joe Ashley made a motion to approve the May 2024 minutes. Reb Monaco seconded the motion. All were in favor with Sara Husby and Ben Munger abstaining. Motion passed. Matt asked if any discussion was needed for the September 2024 meeting. None was offered. Matt asked for a motion to approve the September 2024 meeting minutes. Reb Monaco made the motion to approve the September 2024 minutes. Chris Fridel seconded the motion. All were in favor with Sara Husby, Ben Munger, and Andre Sanchez abstaining. Motion passed.

Next, Oviatt provided an overview of the Doodle poll for upcoming RAC meetings. The poll outlined an in-person meeting in September of 2025 and virtual meetings for February and May of 2026. The Doodle poll showed we had a couple of days in May 2025 available, but in February 2026, there was not a day available that the RAC could meet with a full quorum. Therefore, after discussing with Gabe, we will have two meetings in the next federal registry notice- a September 2025 in-person meeting and a May 2026 virtual meeting. The September 2025 in-person meeting will be in Mother Lode. The most convenient days for everyone were Wednesday and Thursday the 17th and 18th. Ben Munger was the only one that could not attend on the 17th according to the Doodle Poll. Ben stated that he could probably adjust to come on the 17th field tour and then the 18th would be the business meeting. Sara Husby noted that her schedule has shifted a bit and would prefer not to meet on those dates anymore, but she could make that happen if needed. She stated that she could possibly do a zoom component and just miss the field day. Bob Schnieder noted that he might be participating in the Nome Cult Walk on those dates. Then the discussion moved to the virtual meeting on May 7, 2026. Reb Monaco noted that he is available until 2 p.m. but has a commitment that afternoon and would need to leave by 2:45.

Matt ended discussion and called for a motion. Laurie Collom made a motion to hold the in-person meeting on September 17 and 18, 2025, in Mother Lode. Michael Lueders seconded the motion. All voted in favor with Sara Husby voting no and Bob Schneider voting no. Motion passed.

Matt asked for a motion for the May 2026, virtual meeting. Mary Boblet made a motion to hold an all-virtual meeting on May 7, 2026, with an aim to conclude business by 2 p.m. Michael Lueders seconded the motion. All were in favor, motion passed.

BLM Central California District and Field Office Updates Presentation:

Matt turned the time over to **CenCal District Manager Gabe Garcia** to start the presentation. Gabe provided an overview of the Central California District- five field offices: Bakersfield, Bishop, Mother Lode, Central Coast, and Ukiah. ~ 2.2 million acres, 260 employees. Ten of those are our District employees, 200 in the field offices and 50 are tied to our fire program. He described the District's diverse landscapes. He highlighted programs including oil and gas, timber, mining activities and lots of recreational opportunities. He stated that the field offices will go into more detail on a lot of the projects going on. He mentioned the national conservation land units, national monuments and areas that have special designations-stating that we have sixty of those throughout the district. There are a lot of activities occurring

regularly throughout the district. Multiple use is an understatement for this District as our focus ranges from energy to recreation to working heavily with utility companies. As we are approaching the spring-summer months, we emphasize our fire program. Currently, there are preseason meetings with fire folks for all Central California. A preparedness review is scheduled for June - this is a National Review with National Office staff reviewing our fire program to make sure we are ready for the upcoming summer.

Gabe introduced **Acting Bakersfield Field Manager John Hodge**. John Hodge greeted everyone and provided an overview of the Bakersfield Field Office, a large area of Central California district with a couple national monuments and several large recreation areas. Last year was a very busy fire year with four large fires- the Hurricane Fire, Long Fire, Borrel Fire and the Coffee Pot Fire. For three of these, we requested and received emergency stabilization and burned area repair funding. On-the-ground work -including heavy equipment, culvert repair, drainage repair was completed to stay ahead of any debris flows. He stated that they are using storm patrols to make sure the work being done has been stabilized and controlling erosion. The office is starting to work on hazard trees, reducing safety hazards, and continuing culvert repair, etc. in some of the more remote burned areas. We have funding for the next five years- and focusing on long term repair efforts.

John highlighted some larger realty projects occurring at the Bakersfield Field Office – highlighting two for “MOMAC” the Master Operations Maintenance and Consolidation project. Bakersfield has been the lead on this pilot project effort that has been on-going for ~5 years. The project consists of taking existing rights-of-way for both PGE and so SCE and consolidating them down to two rights-of-way per utility company- one for distribution, one for transmission with a standardized operations and maintenance plan communication structure. Both BLM and the utility companies are engaged in doing routine operations and maintenance work. This is a model to be pushed out nationwide. The project is currently working with several other field offices across the state to implement.

John also gave an update on the Plains Pipeline project- a pipeline that's been idle since 2015 following an oil spill. Working with different groups over the years to try to reactivate. The project is currently being lead by Sable Corporation. The company is working towards doing repair and a restart of existing pipeline. The office is reviewing spill contingency plan -one of the last projects we needed to do a renewal on the pipeline. Sable can restart operations under the Plains original authorization and are doing repair work to get that line restarted.

John mentioned that the new administration had issued a National Energy Emergency Declaration - focused on energy and critical minerals. The declaration calls for reducing timeframe for permitting- anything under an Environmental Assessment will have 14-day review. Environmental Impact Statement will be reviewed in 28 days. The Bakersfield FO has received six drill permit applications combined with backlog of applications and have approved 60 applications for permit drills so far. He noted that this is not just wells going in but also well abandonments - removing oil wells in the field. He highlighted that Bakersfield has approved 189 abandonments for oil wells. He stated that a major priority is getting out a Supplemental Environmental Impact statement for oil and gas leasing. The office is working on the publication for the Federal Register and initiating scoping on the supplemental EIS specific for oil and gas leasing. It does not affect any of our ongoing oilfield operations. It will supplement the 2014 Resource Management Plan as well as a 2019 supplemental EIS specifically for hydraulic fracturing. This is geared towards resolving litigation in settlement agreements currently in place.

John gave an update on recreation beginning with Carrizo Plain National Monument. This year was a lighter flower year, so some visitation was down. Still quantifying, but expecting we had between 40 and 45,000 visitors since January- not super bloom year numbers. Highlighted ongoing maintenance projects- updates to power systems and water systems including replace batteries for solar systems, etc. He also mentioned that the Piedras Blancas Light Station celebrated its 150th anniversary and that there is ongoing work being done to restore the Light Station amidst the science and education activities occurring there on a regular basis. Next steps will be developing funding for getting full civil engineering specs for construction of the restoration facilities. The Keysville Recreation Area Management Plan is still moving forward. In 2024 we had about 190,000 visitors – keeping our Park Rangers and staff very busy. The Field Office is working on hazardous fuels around the historic properties like the Walker Cabin and the Keysville Cemetery and have a number of legacy events like motorcycle trials in Keysville. Added new events: a 10K run, youth motorbike races, and a poker run coming.

John concluded with a brief on the Coffee Pot fire from last year that burned through several of Giant Sequoia groves at Case Mountain. We have one grove left that was untouched. In a lot of areas, the fire worked just like we would look at for a large broadcast burn going through the area. However, a number of groves burned hotter. Currently tracking ~20 monarchs. The older sequoias being monitored for post fire, looking at mortality, otherwise in pretty good shape.

Matt opened it up for questions from the RAC.

Bob Schneider - Are you coordinating with the Central Valley Water Quality Control Board on the oil and gas approvals?

John stated that for the Central Valley Water Quality Control Board, we are not working with them specifically on our oil and gas approvals. We are trying to streamline those up through the California State Office, in response to the water boards.

Bob Schneider asked if BLM is working with water board on other issues like spills or well abandonment?

John stated not on well abandonments. Typically, we work with CalGEM- California Geologic Energy and Minerals. There's a dual permitting process that is for both of those. For spills, we are active and work out spills as they pop up. Most spills are fairly small, directly adjacent to, like a wellhead or a pipeline leak- so we do work with the operators to get that cleaned up. Staff monitor the environmental compliance to make sure that they are cleaned up.

Mary Boblet - You mentioned litigation in relation to which projects? Perhaps you might share quickly. Is it current litigation? Is it past or are you expecting litigation?

John stated that it is a combination. I was referring to past litigation on the supplemental EIS that we did for hydraulic fracturing and the lease sale that we referenced from 2020. We combined both of them and they went into a settlement agreement. We were going to do another supplemental analysis to look at oil and gas leasing moving forward.

Reb Monaco - Question concerning the Case Mountain logging operation. Have been on tours of area. Roads are almost impossible to get big logging trucks up there. Is anything being done about improving the road situation for logging?

John stated that the office is currently working on road engineering. District engineers already mapped 7 or 10 areas needing road widening efforts. Working with deferred maintenance funds to address. Also have grant with Cal Fire to utilize some of those funds to do repair work/ make accessible for logging.

Gabe then introduced Assistant Manager in Bishop, **Philip Gross**. Gross provided highlights of the Bishop Field office. ~750,000 acres of public land on the eastern side of the Sierras, butted up against the Nevada border (about the size of Yosemite National Park). Manage with ~25

permanent staff and one seasonal employee. Doing a lot with very little.

Philip spoke of the geothermal plant near Mammoth Lakes called CD4 and that puts out enough power for ~25,000 homes a year. He highlighted two large realty projects: rebuild of Ivanpah Control solar power line (Southern California Edison) and a new power line proposal - Western Bounty- a power line running from Oregon to Southern California. Primary power companies are Southern California Edison and LA Department of Water and Power. Realty program issuing right of ways, renewals, and addressing trespass cases.

Philip stated that the Eastern Sierras are a recreation hotspot in California for recreation. In the field office- a lot of mountain biking, trail running, OHV use and especially rock climbing. People come from around the world to climb in Bishop. Regularly featured in rock climbing magazine and rock climbing videos. The Alabama Hills National Scenic Area has a lot of commercials and movies filmed.

Philip described ongoing fuel breaks around the small communities butted up against the BLM lands via contract for wildfire prevention. Last November, the Horseshoe Fire was outside of the town of Lone Pine. Most fires are lightning starts and then are wind driven. They run down canyon, burning out the riparian corridor in the creeks. These creeks flow into our small towns, so it's a big concern. It was evident last November that this is something that can happen with high winds. During that storm winds were 40 to 50 miles an hour. The field office is planning new fuel breaks in the Mono County area to improve safe entry and exits into small communities. A lot of these communities only have one way in and one way out-so improving entry and exit points promotes safety. Fire is not necessarily a benefit to the ecosystem in the Eastern Sierras, as it is on the western side of the Sierra. When fire occurs here, we try to suppress it relatively quickly.

Philip stated that the field office recently signed a Wild Horse Gather Decision. The joint decision between the Bishop Field Office and the Inyo National Forest allows the agencies to gather wild horses and burros outside their designated territory. Most likely would happen in late summer or fall. The Forest Service is the lead agency on the gather and BLM will work in support of their gather efforts. The field office recently updated the Bi-state sage grouse plan and are going through the approval process. Both wild horse gather and the Bi-state sage grouse plan benefits the mule deer population and migratory areas.

Philip concluded that the field office had a recent case of petroglyph damage in the area. We put out a press release asking for public input to hold those responsible accountable. It is a serious concern when archaeological resources are vandalized. We are being as proactive as possible to protect and go after those that damaged the resources.

Matt opened it up for questions from the RAC.

Nancy Muleady Mecham - Please elaborate on trespass cases and mitigation for the archeology vandalism

Philip stated that a lot of our trespass cases are people with private property butting up to BLM lands and build structures or fencing on BLM. We vigilantly monitor public lands, and when we notice, for example, that a horse corral extending further out from their property than last year. We survey and confirm if it is on BLM lands, then let them know they can correct the action. If they choose not to, then they go into trespass.

Nancy Muleady Mecham - Can you follow up about the archaeological damage mitigation? I've been up there and there's no place for a camera unless you actually put a pole 60 feet high with a

camera at the top. Is that a possibility? I know it may be just a deterrent.

Philip stated that cameras are one of the possibilities. This vandalism occurred on a road called Petroglyph Rd. Considering changing the name, although there is a good chance this occurred from somebody in the local community. It's a huge challenge given this is in a remote area, it's difficult for us to patrol on a daily basis. Nancy stated that even if it's a pretend camera, that might be a deterrent. Gross said he agreed and said we have some pretend cameras elsewhere and I like that idea. I'm not heavily involved in this one, so I don't have a whole lot more information. Nancy gave another suggestion: Consider putting up a sign saying you're being monitored. You don't have to say how, but people might think satellite? I don't know. Gross said that was a great suggestion.

Nancy Muleady Mecham - Is the wild horse gather going for adoption or euthanasia?

Philip Oviatt stated that the horse gather is in coordination with the Forest Service. Our united policy is that we do not have any horses going to euthanasia. They will all go up for adoption and we are only gathering the horses, not burros. We will be gathering horses that are residing outside of the Montgomery Pass Wild horse territory. Nancy stated she has seen them down at Mono Lake and they really can churn things up.

Mary Boblet stated that early on, you mentioned about the power system that is new from Southern Oregon and that was very briefly described. I was just wondering, is that a federal project? What are we talking about in terms of customers? The asset is serving which population?

Philip stated that the project was recently proposed. It is a private company- not sure the name, but the project is called Western Bounty and that comes from somewhere in Oregon. Not sure exactly where it starts, but the line would run from Oregon through western Idaho down into central Nevada and eventually into California down to Southern California. It will go through full NEPA process and include mitigations. It's worth mentioning, but there's a chance it might not even play out.

Laurie Collom stated that she'd like to visit and tour the Bishop area.

Philip welcomed the idea and said one exciting thing is we've been putting a lot of attention to our trail systems. We don't have a lot of trails in the Bishop Field Office, but what we do have, we're working really hard to open them up and make them high quality. We'll get out on a trail and you can see all of our good work.

Bob Schneider - I love the Alabama Hills. I go down to rock climb pretty regularly and I think the management plan and moving camping away from the west side of Movie Road has been a great advancement. The main access on the Whitney Road has a detour going up towards the Tunnel Creek Campground more directly. Do you have any information on how the repair for Whitney Road is going?

Philip said that the repairs have been made. We opened that up around the end of March. It was closed again for two weeks for a culvert repair on the upper part portion of Whitney Portal Road. The entire road is open to Whitney Portal now.

Gabe next introduced **Field Manager Zachary Ormsby** from the Central Coast Field Office. He highlighted the Every Kid Outdoor passes, for 4th graders to access to Federal public lands, not just BLM, includes Forest Service, National Park Service, US Fish and Wildlife Service. BLM-wide in 2023 roughly 2,200 passes handed out all across BLM's 245,000,000 acres in 2000. In 2024, our field office worked with elected officials in our county supervisors to network with offices of Education and Monterey County, Santa Cruz County and San Benito County. In 2024, we were able to hand out over 10,000 every kid outdoor passes to local 4th graders, and then we replicated that again here in 2025 - one of the accomplishments we're most proud. They are working with other states to help them understand distribution channels than just handing these out at field offices or a visitor centers.

Zachary gave an update on Fort Ord National Monument which is a 7,000-acre former army military range that continually transferred ammunitions. After the base closer as areas cleared of ammunition, they are transferred to the BLM for management. Working closely with the army on restoration. Have turned old military bombing artillery range lands into the largest intact set of coastal chaparrals in the state of California. We've discovered four new species and we're looking on verification for a fifth plant species- it's been a remarkable effort. Fort Ord National Monument hosts the Sea Otter Classic- the largest bicycle event in the contiguous United States. It draws about \$70 million a year in economic contributions to the County of Monterey- so it has a huge economic impact, not only for this local area, but also for the BLM, because of the special recreation permit issued for event. Fort Ord National Monument had been managed by one man- Eric Morgan, who recently retired. Fort Ord National Monument is currently without a manager and based on the hiring freeze, we're not able to rehire currently. Field office is coming together working on some strategies to figure out how to "hold down that Fort." Looking at different avenues/seeing what this special place might look like in the future.

Zachary said that Cotoni-Coast Dairies, near Santa Cruz, is expected to open this summer of 2025. BLM acquired property in 2014 as part of the California Coastal National Monument. Managing the coast and islands is not typically what you think of when you think of BLM. We do things a little different because our geography is different. The Resource Management Plan and the EA for Cotoni-Coast Dairies areas had been challenged for a number of years, so we issued a new Environmental Assessment through coordination with elected officials and community members. The litigation that was originally brought against the parking area from the Davenport North Coast Association, Friends of the North Coast and the Rural Bonny Doon Association. Working with those groups, we created a shared vision for the future. We received letters of support this go round in our Environmental Assessment for this parking area, which is a big shift to go from opposition. We're getting better integrated with the local community and engaging in a collaborative process. The parking lot is currently under construction- implementation crew is out there right now moving dirt. Bathroom has been installed. Have almost 9 miles of trails completed from that parking lot and trailhead in a stacked loop. Loop one goes from the parking areas built for adaptive cyclist- going to be the first one in this county. Loop two gets progressively harder and it goes through redwoods then up into a coastal terrace with a panoramic view of the Pacific Ocean- about 270° completely unobstructed. Trails were built by the Santa Cruz Mountain Trail Stewardship Group, a nonprofit that raised about 3 million. \$1,000,000 really in private funds and donations to build these trails. We just breached 8,000 volunteer hours from folks building trails. Looking forward to opening to the public. Recently partnered with the Foundation for America's Public Lands, BLM's nonprofit that was stood up last year. The foundation expressed interest to be involved in this property.

Zachary highlighted the partnership with the local cattle grazer at Cotoni. The permittee recently purchased virtual fencing and B callers for cows at this property. This will be the first in the world to use GPS collared cows to control their movement to keep them off the recreation trails and limit interactions with the visitors. We didn't want to litter this landscape with fencing- a progressive and exciting step. The collars were negligible in cost. The recreation trails estimated costs were between about \$3-5 million. We did not want fencing across this entire landscape. Halter is the company, Halter has also stepped up to say that they're going to help fund some of our interpretive panels about the history of ranching.

He also stated that the field office received \$2.2 million in Great American Outdoor Act Funding to restore the Historic Cheese Barn. It's going to be rebuilt board by board from the foundation. Partnering with Big Creek Lumber, that's been operating in this area for about 150 years for

replacement boards. They will bring old milling equipment and use the redwoods from our property to mill the new wood, using historic methods to make historically accurate as possible.

Zachary concluded by highlighting their management of an area out in San Benito County called Pinoch Plateau which is home to the endangered Blunt Nosed Leopard Lizard. The Central Coast biologist is one of the foremost authors and experts on this lizard. The species were down to roughly half a dozen known living specimens in this northern part of their range. Staff hand captured those and collaborated on a captive breeding program at the Fresno Chafee Zoo. We've recently started releasing those captive breed lizards back onto the Pinoch Plateau- it's a huge recovery story. We liken it to the California Condor, where it got down to a few remaining birds, went into captive breeding and then reintroduction.

Matt opened it up for questions from the RAC.

Nancy Muleady Mecham - I'm curious about the GPS cattle. Who's funding that? Does it direct them back through electronic stimulation when they get close to the fence, if they get close to the fence, does it zap them to turn them around? How's that work?

Zachary said BLM's nonprofit arm- the Foundation for America's Public Lands funded it. Comes with a contract, but they funded it for four years. They use auditory clues primarily. They found if you put an audio output from the collar on the right side it forces the cow to turn its head left. If you work with cows, they go where their head goes. The beeps get progressively louder and more repetitious to get the cow to turn its head. If the cow does not obey it will eventually give an electrical impulse- more of a vibration than it is like a shock collar that you may be familiar with. They have about 99% success rate with cows. About 300 head of cattle have the collars now and it's so precise that in New Zealand they use these cows to strip off row crops and so they get them down to within about 10 inches of movement based. Really cool part of this particular project is the lessees or ranchers here have been in this area for about 5 generations- it's currently a father-daughter operation. BLM requires the ranchers to maintain fences. When we discovered this technology and working with some of our partners, the daughter now moves those cows with an app. She basically draws a circle of where they want those cows, and those collars start beeping and move the cattle in that direction. It's going to allow us to use some outcome-based grazing strategies, keep them out of riparian areas more effectively manage the weeds out there. And just as important keep a ranching family in business. Nancy asked what the name of the system was. It's so intriguing. Ormsby stated that the name of company is Halter. Halter was developed in New Zealand, and they've moved their headquarters to Denver, Co, but they were developed near the coast. They're familiar with the salt water and the fog and the reduced sunlight. Great partners to work with. They're so excited about this property, they want to help us by putting interpretive signs out there.

Gabe introduced **Mother Lode Assistant Field Manager Noah Triplett**. He highlighted that the Mother Lode Field Office is in the southeast near Yosemite National Park and runs basically down the center of the Central Valley and along the foothills. We are between the Eldorado National Forest lands above us and then the Central Valley below us with a lot of urban interface. Highways 80 and 50 are major arteries bringing the public. The field office is in Eldorado Hills- near Sacramento. We have about 21 current employees, with several vacancies.

The field office is home to two preserves: the Pine Hill Preserve in Cameron Park and the Consumnes River Preserve which is a big Pacific flyway wintering ground. We have a visitor center there and permanent staff- it's a place to go see the sandhill cranes.

Fuels projects in the field office focus on setbacks to protect private properties. Forest health projects involving timber sales is also a part of our program.

Noah highlighted recreation within the field office. At set times of the year, the hydro companies (like SMUD or PG&E) release water for recreation. Those are big events for the public. Currently trying to get our campground on the South side up and running. NEPA is complete for expanding a parking lot at the Don Pedro parking lot, which is that Red Hills ACEC. It's a big recreation area, so working on that in the next year.

The field office has been working on the Merced River Corridor in the Wild Scenic River section targeting the Italian star thistle. They also utilize sheep grazing every year. Last year was the first year we had sheep at Magnolia Ranch- a big recreation area there on the South Fork of the American River. Have had sheep at Cronan Ranch for a number of years now.

The Blue Moon Mining project is a new mining project within the field office. It is a critical minerals mining operation- zinc primarily. It is a unique situation tectonically - a pocket with quite a few critical minerals- so they are going to expand that mine. Mainly underground subsurface infrastructure.

Noah stated that the field office has a lot of beetle kill. He described the fuels reduction work- thinning and removing ladder fuels. Cal Fire's track chipper was used to clear around the Cameron Park neighborhoods. We had a 100-foot clearance, and we bumped that up to 200 feet with the new guidelines that were approved-which makes it much easier to do these fuel setbacks. The track chipper is remote controlled, on tracks and can be controlled remotely to follow the crew.

Matt opened it up for questions from the RAC.

Mary Boblet - I'm from Arnold- this is my backyard. You talked about the Davis Mill and timber sales. Confirming the mill itself is not related to the timber being taken, you're not milling it there, correct?

Noah stated that is correct, the timber is not identified for being used for that structure.

Mary Boblet - You were talking about stacking logs at Bumerville. Is there any Nexus to the biomass plant that is planned in that area?

Noah stated that he was not that I'm aware of that. Nevada County pulled off about 140 tons of timber out around surrounding the South Yuba Campground and they had a biochar facility going for this last year or last six months or so. They're closed now, but they would take those logs and create biochar, which I think is similar to charcoal-a carbon sequester process.

Mary Boblet - There's a biomass facility being planned for quite some time. I can get that information to you. Jeff may know about it, who was doing the biochar? Was that Nevada County proper?

Noah said yes, it is Nevada County proper.

Mary Boblet - And then lastly, the devil's nose. Is this Mokelumne River devil's nose?

Noah said that devil's nose is the section out of Salt Springs reservoir. They did a two- day release. They're doing 7 days of releases out of Tiger Creek coming up- right above Hwy. 26 and below the Tiger Creek reservoir. We'll be monitoring those as well.

Nancy Muleady Mecham - From the biology standpoint, 94% of what makes a tree or a plant is the carbon dioxide in the water. That's why there's not big holes in the ground where the trees came from. The basis for the biochar is returning those 6% of different nutrients from selenium and calcium and all that other stuff back.

Reb Monaco - Mother Lode- there used to be a historic silk factory facility that was founded before the gold rush. I don't know if that's part of the Mother Lode BLM jurisdiction or not, or if it's still out there. Any knowledge about that?

Noah responded - It's in the Gold Hill area. I think when they were acquiring it, there were discussions about trying to give it to BLM. But the American River Conservancy has retained it and currently actively managing for preservation of that property. They do cattle grazing, sheep grazing, they have a tenant farmer who does garden or vegetable gardening. I can't remember the name of the farm, but it's open to the public.

André Sanchez - You were mentioning they're going to be expanding that mine. I'm curious what the planning process for expanding that mine is going to look like, particularly given many of the watersheds or the headwaters for the San Joaquin Valley and both even Sacramento Valley are part of your field office. I'm wondering if there's going to be strong considerations for the watershed impacts.

Noah stated that the mine is in the valley -it's not in the headwaters and it follows the guidelines of the 1872 Mining, Mining law- those have all been met.

Gabe turned time over to **Ukiah Field Manager Neal Craig**. Neal stated that he had been in Ukiah for just over three months. He commended all the staff accomplishments. He said they are a little bit understaffed, but have added staff and starting to pick up pace. The Ukiah Field Office manages a couple of national monuments - Berryessa Snow Mountain and Point Arena. We have a lot of different recreation in our office here. Just a few of the SRPs - range from equestrian, hunting groups, running education, rafting. We have a broad user base and OHV is a big part of that especially in the South Cow Mountain area.

Neal gave a Geyser's geothermal update. Last year we completed the first geothermal lease renewals in BLM and with the geysers there- we did about five of those. We have two more coming up- one in 2027 and one in 2029. They have longer terms/options of how they may drill more wells and utilize geothermal a down the road.

Scott's Creek was highlighted as a success story. Our law enforcement was just updating our team last week that they were reinstalling fencing (a seasonal yearly thing). The fence comes down when flows go up and or is damaged if it's left up. Every year, staff take down or put up this massive fence to keep OHV users and all wheel vehicles out of the creek. There were all sorts of things four years ago that they were responding to in this area. Resource damage, abandoned vehicles, stuck vehicles, water quality issues. Last week when LE were at the site, folks were using swimming holes which had gone away with all of the resource damage. Taken many years and a lot of effort to educate and work on this area. We get a lot of recreational use for the off-road vehicles, UTVs, etc. This is the type of success that we would like to see as we have the capacity. This past year had no law enforcement incidences.

Neal provided Berryessa Snow Mountain National Monument updates. The field office manages the area in partner with the Forest Service. We're going through alternatives and setting up visitor feedback surveys, which will probably start this fall. Planning efforts are ongoing process. Coming out of this year and going into next fiscal year hope to have data back and planning materials to guide how we move forward.

Neal concluded with highlights of continued Partnerships. We have really good partnerships here, and we're trying to figure out how to increase our on the ground actions with groups. The foundation was mentioned before. We're looking into how we can utilize the foundation when combined thoughts, ideas and ways to implement things match.

We're working hard on our signage, our kiosks - staff have been doing a great job. He highlighted a new kiosk installed at Walker Ridge, trying to get more informational material and help people know rules and highlight those areas. We have a significant amount of trails in the Ukiah Field Office and we're struggling with unauthorized trails popping up faster. The signs are an ongoing issue as is keeping fences repaired. We've had success using boulders or post and wire to keep users in the areas they need to be in. Improving riparian areas and building those back up to the standards we expect. Staff is focused on marking trails, flagging trails, keeping people on trails and closing those with resource damages off trail. After fires too, we see user trails uptick when there aren't vegetative barriers. This is key to managing multiple use. Working on emergency stabilization projects from the Ridge Fire and just this week/last week we were out on the ground installing and implementing emergency stabilization work. That will be ongoing through the rest of this fiscal year. Have some posting cable to put up to make sure the folks stay out of those areas while those are revegetating and stabilizing.

Neal continued by stating that crews do an awesome job coming together no matter what their resource specialty is to do whichever job needs to be done. Toilets at our campgrounds are nice facilities. Picnic tables, barbecues, pits, are other amenities we provide at campground areas. Currently don't charge any fees at all for these structures and facilities and it's become really hard to maintain those. We'll be looking at any way we can including putting together a business plan for possible fees down the road and seeing what we can do to help continue operating these great facilities for our users. Our OHV grants have become more competitive, so we're getting less dollars despite costs going up.

Neal concluded with a report out on fuels treatments. The Black Forest pile burn is complete. We did a prescribed burn out at Point Arena and that went well. Those have been the first for our field office in a while. Our fuel staff are doing amazing job getting our NEPAs done and getting support. The Black Black Forest burn was quite large as far as operations go, because it was really close to the community. Our fuels folks did a great job pulling in Cal Fire, Forest Service, and partners to complete the burn. We've been having more asked of us from the communities on fuel breaks, prescribed burns, etc. We have a proposed extra fuel break near Clear Lake. The east side has already been completed and they're requesting the remaining work completed next. Those evaluations are ongoing.

Matt opened it up for questions from the RAC.

Bob Schneider - One year ago we actually met in this region in Woodland and we took a tour of Molok Luyuk that was designated as an addition to the Berryessa Snow Mountain National Monument. We're looking forward to the 10-year anniversary on July 10th. We're looking forward to that and we're understanding there may be some resources to put something together for that with the BLM and some of their partners.

Mary Boblet - I manage a CAL Fire fuel reduction project in my area. I was on a zoom with the state recently. They made some really bold steps to eliminate the bottlenecks. There's a new process for getting projects approved. I'm not sure if BLM is necessarily involved in any of these things. But it's a pretty significant change that I just wanted to make you aware of. It's affected my project in a very good way. Lastly, I attend a yearly annual conference put on by the state, the annual Trails and Greenways Conference. You would fit right in because there are many unauthorized trails discussed at this conference and entities have found very successful ways of dealing with users who may be altering the land and affecting resources. One of them is East Bay Regional Park District. I can put you in touch with those people or you can reach out to them.

Sarah Husby - I am in Davis, CA and helped worked on the original designation of Berryessa Snow Mountain National Monument. I'm really familiar with the Ukiah Field Office area. I have some questions just to understand your presentation a little bit more. Are OHV flash mobs exactly what I think they are? Almost like dance flash mobs and how often are they happening and what kind of damage?

Neal stated that he has coined that term because it's the best way he knows how to explain it. And yes, you're right. What we're seeing is a change in dynamic of maybe who's using some of these areas. Used to be that we'd have designated 4x4 groups or things like that that we would usually have a really good relationships with - somebody to go meet and speak with. Now we're seeing a lot of Instagram or social media post where somebody says, hey, we're gonna go ride out at Walker Ridge or Indian Valley this weekend. And then that weekend comes and there'll be 200 people out there. These aren't groups. These are just folks that are like, cool, I'm going too! And so that is definitely something that that we're facing. It causes things like overflow parking, where we really don't have overflow parking. Folks park down the highway where it's really not parking. We're actually watching social media to know when and where these things are occurring. We've had really good partnerships with our law enforcement game wardens and sheriffs to help us have more folks on the ground that can help oversee these events. It's not like an event we would normally coordinate through a recreation permit or something like that.

Sarah Husby- In your presentation you mentioned online fee only. What type of online fees are you thinking of? And how are they going to be enforced?

Neal- We don't have anything particularly set at this point. The reason I said online only is because we would struggle with a lot of our sites to get out routinely and do the cache boxes. I think that would be really difficult for us to do. I think we're just looking at all avenues and open to any ideas and suggestions. There are things like rec.gov which come with some cost. I'm open to any ideas. But looking online methodology just to match our capacity.

Chris Friedel- You mentioned community partnerships and notices of funding opportunities. My question is probably for the larger group/anybody who knows. There were a number of notices of funding opportunity or NOFOs that were posted during the last administration that have since been removed from grants.gov. I'm wondering is there any news about when those might be reposted?

Gabe- We're hoping they open soon, but I don't have an exact date unfortunately. This is something we're tracking closely. We get a lot of our work done through those so we're hoping it opens up soon.

André Sanchez - This definitely would be beating a dead horse, but I just a quick question. We have had very lengthy discussions about the recreation fee collection methodologies and even had like a whole presentation on rec.gov. So, I will defer the bigger conversation for another point, but just know that there have been many thoughts and discussions about implementation of fee collections and the different ways to do so. Perhaps the rec.gov people could share their presentation with you to give you more of an idea of their price breakdown.

Neal- That's great, André. Thanks for bringing that up. I don't want to necessarily rehash things. But yeah, I'm looking at ways to not close facilities in the future. That's definitely the issue that I'm looking at and facing. So that'd be great to have those kind of previous notes and the barriers and suggestions that'd be perfect.

Bob Schneider - In the minutes from a year ago it said that they were looking for a manager for the Berryessa Snow Mountain National Monument. We're really happy that Kay-Leigh Barnitz is the National Monument manager. Congrats to her. That happened over the last year. I think it was June when she was appointed. I have two other comments one on fuels Project Cal Fire. The Berryessa Snow Mountain National Monument has become an example for developing the potential operational delineations. The Forest Service has developed and is using them in the Mendocino National Forest and expanding to include the entire Berryessa Snow Mountain

National Monument and Cal Fire under a law passed last year. So, I just want to call attention to that for you, Neal, and I think through this method of developing the PODs and including public participation in that process, we can avoid a lot of the initial issues and focus on protecting assets, resources, property, people and natural resources. I look forward to discussing more with you and Kay-Leigh on the monument management plan.

Matt called for a break and thanked the BLM for all their presentations and efforts.

Matt welcomed the group back from the break. He took a moment to remind RAC members that their role is to make recommendations (versus approve) plans for fee proposals. He went over procedures of how he was going to run each of the plans being presented by the Forest Service including how the RAC and the public would be able to provide comments. He then turned the time over to Winfred (Fred) Wong to present the Inyo National Forest's Christmas Tree Proposal.

Inyo National Forest – Christmas Tree Permits

Winfred (Fred) Wong, District Ranger, Mammoth RD presented. He thanked the BLM and RAC for including the FS in this meeting. His proposal is to implement \$20 Christmas Tree permits for the Inyo National Forest. Fred provided an overview of the Inyo National Forest visitation, described recreational opportunities and natural setting drawing visitors to the Forest. He clarified the location of the Inyo within the Central CA BLM RAC boundaries. Inyo is one of 18 National Forest in CA; located on the eastern Sierras in Central BLM District. He highlighted how the Inyo works closely with the BLM Bishop Field Office.

Fred provided an overview of the amenities and services provided under the fee program and specifically outlined the market research and components of the Christmas tree permit proposal- \$20/Christmas tree permit, offered online (\$2.50 reservation fee) and in person. \$20/ Christmas tree permit is in alignment with the nearby national forests operating a Christmas tree program. He described the difference of providing an experience for harvesting a tree versus paying for a farm grown tree harvested. He clarified that the free 4th grade Every Kid Outdoors pass would allow a free Christmas tree permit.

Fred explained how the funds from the permit would support plowing parking areas, pumping toilets and keeping them open, providing trash service, printing maps of cutting areas, and supporting law enforcement and visitor contacts for in person purchase. The funds would support visitor center operations on the weekends and monitoring to ensure resources are protected- including funding silviculturist to keep monitor cutting units. He highlighted a few examples of the existing fee program accomplishments- including funding youth corps that assist with trail work and rec site improvements. He described the non-wilderness area that would be the pilot plots for the tree program and highlighted the public involvement opportunities and overview of comments received.

RAC Discussions and Questions for Inyo

Matt Kingsley- Requested the Committee raise hands and ask questions and then Fred could respond to them collectively. Matt asked Fred to confirm the rec.gov fee and the permit fee- is it \$17.50, or if you buy it online, is it \$22.50? Also, you noted a pilot area to start the program, do you have to come back to the RAC to change the boundaries? He also noted thinning forest is something the Forest Service pays for; noted BLM offers pinon trees at \$5.

Bob Schneider - voiced his concerns about the Mt. Whitney Lottery and rec.gov and his distrust

of rec.gov especially at \$8. He did note that this is less of a concern since there is an in-person option. Appreciates being offered the option of in-person permit. He agreed that coordinating with fuel reduction needs is positive.

André Sanchez - Clarify how this proposal ties with fuels reduction projects/ coordinated with landscape scale management.

Laurie Collom - Does this help thin the forest? Appreciate offering the “experience” a lot of us are willing to pay for an experience. Appreciates the parking and bathroom offerings especially since she has a young child. Thinks the fee proposed is appropriate for the services offered.

Mary Boblet - Ditto on Laurie’s comments, appreciate the fee and amenities provided. Winter/access FS for experience. Recognizes that she doesn’t pay fees for trails in her area and is this a slippery slope? Also does this need a Timber Harvest Plan? Is that required?

Michael Lueders – Clarify that fees go directly to this program? Mtn Whitney is managed separately?

Reb Monaco - I would probably go to a retail outlet if I were to get a tree. Important to understand how it ties to forest management. I have a neutral position, I most likely support it.

Sara Husby - Has the Inyo tried to get this program up and running in the past? If yes, why did it not happen yet?

André Kennedy(FS)- clarified in the chat the Whitney fees are managed separately from the Christmas Tree program, or the fees generated from the tree sales.

Fred- The Christmas tree program is really focused more on the visitor experience versus costly large landscape scale fuels reduction projects with a differing silviculture prescription with complicated size class and spatial arrangement. It contrasts to the Christmas tree program. He thinks it unlikely to have that fuels reduction impact against catastrophic wildfire. Pricing- the tree permit is \$20 in person and \$20 online with the recreation.gov reservation fee of \$2.50, so \$22.50 online. This is the first time we’ve presented a Christmas tree proposal, have not provided this service in the past.

André Sanchez- Comments that he would argue that the fuels reductions projects could be readily done within an area planned for Christmas tree removal. Wants to make a point it doesn't seem like it wouldn't be able to overlap with the two goals.

Todd Harbin, assistant recreation fee program manager for the Forest Service, provided national context for Christmas tree program. Numerous Christmas trees programs agency wide. NF’s in California have been doing it for a while. Last year in the agency, we had about 300 programs and 12,000 trees sold agency wide. About 80% of the sales go through recreation.gov; about 20% are over the counter. Though it’s new to the Inyo, but it's not new to the Forest Service. Confirmed that the Inyo would not come back to the RAC to expand the program area. If we were to change the price, we’d have to start public involvement again and represent to the RAC for a recommendation to the Regional Forester for a decision. Todd further clarified that the funds go into an overall forest recreation fee fund, but we know how much is brought in on Christmas trees so we can take that money and put it towards managing the Christmas tree program- staffing seasonals, extending the seasonal so they can go additional patrolling, funding

staff the front desk and sell permits and provide visitor info, answer the phones (we get a lot of phone calls and especially if it's new this year) printing maps, etc.

Matt Kingsley opened the meeting for public comment. No members of the public voiced concerns during open comment section.

Matt asked for a motion. Nancy Muleady Mecham made a motion to recommend the proposal as presented. Joe Ashley seconded the motion. All RAC voted YES with Andre Sanchez voting NO. Motion passed.

Matt turns the time to the Randy Kyes from the Humbolt Toiyabe NF.

Humbolt Toiyabe National Forest – Christmas Tree Permits

Randy Kyes Recreation, Heritage, & Wilderness Staff Officer gave the presentation. He thanked the committee and BLM for listening to the H-T's fee proposal. Randy provided the overview: H-T is in the Intermountain region, which covers more than 34 million acres, providing thousands of rec opportunities spread across 5 National Forest in Idaho, 5 in Utah, and then one in Wyoming. The H-T is in both Nevada and California. H-T at approximately 6.3 million acres, making it the largest National Forest in the lower 48 states.

Randy explained that the Christmas tree permit program is part of a forest wide-fee proposal. The overall proposal relates to new and increased fees at 27 develop recreation sites across 5 Ranger districts. The Christmas tree permit is the only portion of the proposal within the BLM Central California District boundaries- on Carson and Bridgeport Ranger districts, specifically the portions of those Ranger districts that lie in Alpine and mono counties of California (the rest of the proposal will need to be presented to three different RACS for recommendations). He outlined the connection to the BLM Central California RAC and that the Christmas Tree program in the RAC boundaries was the focus of the presentation.

Randy stated that current Christmas Tree permits are \$10. The proposal is to change to \$20 per Christmas tree permit allowing up to two permits per household, with rec.gov fee of \$2.50 if purchased online. The permits are also offered through partner vendors and at our offices. Clarified that the program would be moving 100% to the REA authority which has 100% fee retention. Clarified *currently* half of the funds received from Christmas tree sales goes to the timber program as a stumpage fee and is not retained.

He highlighted the planned accomplishments that will result in the implementation of this proposal. The proposed fee increase promotes efficient management for this popular program through additional staff time both year-round and seasonal. Example, extending permanent seasonals into fall and winter for monitoring, maintaining and identifying the tree areas, coordinating with vendors, and then monitoring and enforcing rules and regulations during the cutting season. Funds can also support law enforcement and forest protection officers with monitoring compliance with the rules when needed. Overall, this will allow the forest to ensure better compliance with rules and regulations, ensure a safe and effective program that provides a valuable service to the public while also protecting natural and cultural resources across the zone.

Funds will also support producing updated educational materials and maps and extend office hours for in person purchases. The FS wants to work with partner organizations to develop educational interpretive programming on the tree program and forest resources, using the additional funding through agreements and some of those partners would be Eastern Sierra

Interpretive Association, Great Basin Institute and others to assist with events and programs.

The 4th grader pass Every Kid Outdoors Pass, which is free to any 4th grade student entitled to holder and their family to a single Christmas tree permit at no cost. That pass can be used to both obtain the permit via rec. Gov. or at our local Forest Service offices.

Randy concluded with an overview of public involvement. Clarified the public involvement included the forest wide proposals and most of the comments were centered around recreation sites closer to Las Vegas. Walked through the commenting timeline and process as well as comments received. Overall received 22 specific comments on the Christmas tree fee proposal, eight were in support, 13 were opposed and one had suggestions from the public. Comments were reviewed by the Forest. They recognized while there was some opposition, the realities of managing the permit program with increased cost, reduced budget allocations through our normal Congressional Budget methods and our reduced staffing necessitates an increase to ensure a safe and functional program that provides opportunities for families while protecting natural and cultural resources.

RAC Discussions and Questions for the Humboldt Toiyabe

Matt Kingsley – I understand that vendors get to keep a portion of the funds- will that change? Is that nation-wide for all of the passes?

Nancy Muleady Mecham - Does the interagency passes also qualify for a free tree permit- the military, the seniors, disabled? Is that through the entire Forest Service or Humboldt Toiyabe?

Michael Lueders - What is the trend over time for permits issued? Do you know the history of the permits?

Todd Harbin- Clarified that 10% is a standard discount provided to the vendors nation-wide, not only for a Christmas trees, but if they sell our Forest passes in their store, they purchase them at a 10% discount and then they sell them at fair value to the public.

Randy- Clarified that only the fourth-grade pass allows for a fee Christmas tree permit, the other passes only would apply to recreation sites (not presented to this RAC). For trend over time, don't have a full dataset to refer to on that. It's been +/- 7,000/year with minor fluctuations.

Matt Kingsley called for public comment. No members of the public voiced concerns.

Matt Kingsley asked for a motion. Laurie Collom made a motion to recommend the proposal as presented. Matt Kingsley seconded the motion. All voted in favor. Motion passed unanimously.

Before the Winter Recreation fee proposal presentation began, there was a brief discussion lead by Public Affairs Officer informing the RAC that André Sanchez would be recusing himself from the discussion and vote due to conflict of interest.

Matt Kingsley turned the time over to the Los Padres National Forest.

Los Padres National Forest – Winter Recreation Area-

Karina Medina District Ranger, Mt. Pinos Ranger District gave the presentation. She

explained the Frazier Mountain Recreational Fee Proposal. As a result of the increased forest visitors, increased operating costs, and decreased discretionary budget allocations available for recreation, maintaining this developed recreation site is a challenge. She gave an overview of location- stretches to the North near Big Sur and to the South hugging the I-5 near Lake Piru. Interstate 5 Highway is adjacent to the Mt. Pinos Ranger districts. The Mt Pinos proximity to this major highway provides access for recreational opportunities to the greater Los Angeles areas, Ventura County, and the Southern San Joaquin Valley. She also clarified that the location is within the BLM Central California District.

Karina defined snow play- it usually consists of family visiting the forest to sled, build snow men, snowball fights, cross country skiing, and outdoor grilling. The area brings a large number of visitors, usually families. Local CHP estimates up to 5,000 daily visitors on an average snow play day -with concentrated use occurring on weekends between mid-November to mid-April. This is an estimate of 60,000 visitors for a Snow Play Season. Roughly 90% of these visitors are Spanish speaking.

Karina clarified the amenities and services provided and how Frazier Mountain ties to the larger snow play area. She described the Snow Play Collaborative that convenes pre-season meetings to prepare and improve on Snow Play operations for the upcoming season. This collaborative consists of Los Padres National Forest, Los Padres Volunteer Group Nordic Ski Patrol; California Highway Patrol; Frazier Park Chamber of Commerce; Kern County Supervisor's Office; Kern County Department of Public Works; Kern County/Ventura County and Los Angeles County Sheriff's Departments; and search and rescue units from Kern and Ventura counties.

Karina concluded by explaining that the Adventure Pass and interagency passes are honored. The Forest will utilize funds from these fees in the following:

- **Traffic Management.** With high visitation, traffic congestion is a significant public safety concern. Advance coordination and planning is necessary to address pedestrians and highway traveler safety. Snow removal of the major roads is accomplished by Kern Co Public Works, while snow removal to this site is completed by Forest employees. The Forest uses a portable electronic signs at various locations to inform visitors, before they arrive, of road conditions, tire chain requirements, and recreation fee requirements.
- **Sanitation** The large volume of associated human waste and trash presents natural resource and public health and safety concerns. When snow is present the Forest will provide portable toilets, trash dumpsters, and trash cans at this location. Removal of snowplay-related trash (sleds, plastic sheets, food, toilet paper, etc.) is an extremely heavy workload for Forest employees.
- **Public Safety and Security.** When snow is present Mt. Pinos receives large numbers of visitors in a concentrated areas, presenting additional public safety, security, and natural resource concerns. At these times, Forest, County, and State law enforcement staff, volunteers, and forest employees provide for public safety, traffic and parking control. Emergency Responder vehicle access is a priority during traffic control in the event of emergency services need from snow play injuries and other emergency matters.
- **Volunteer Customer Services.** The forest hosted volunteer Nordic Ski Patrol group assists by providing visitors with public information and education, basic first aid services, parking assistance and redirection, and assists with search and rescue operations as needed.
- **Provided overview of recent fee accomplishments and the public involvement process and results.** Forest received a total of 31 comments. Comments included 12 in support, 2

in support if money goes back to the site, 6 in support with suggestions, 4 opposed (one being a letter), 1 opposed with suggestion, 1 opposed with concerns, 2 with a general question about the fee proposal, and 3 with questions concerning OHV use (not part of fee proposal). After reviewing the comments and local briefings, the forest has decided not to make any changes to the current fee proposal.

RAC Discussions and Questions for the Los Padres

Matt Kingsley - Supports the proposal, although he is now recognizing this new concept of pay to play in the snow, but that is likely because he grew up in the Midwest.

Mary Boblet - Lives close to one of the state's OHV parks that is a snow play area. Can the passes be purchased online/ are they nonrefundable? Any issue that parking area can't be plowed? Is there a fine if the permit isn't displayed?

Laurie Collom - Recognizes an issue with people parking on private land with snow play and the associated trash or have issues when public opportunities do not exist. I appreciate this opportunity for people and again providing the parking, the plowing and the facilities for people to have an area to go and play in the snow because people do want to do that.

Nancy Muleady Mecham - Fee collection- some of the sporting good stores sell the permits, is that an option for your program? Is there a way to sell the permits that is not online? A way to get the pass without internet?

Bob Schneider – Similar to Nancy- if there's not an office nearby, is there a local vendor so visitors don't have to use rec.gov?

Micheal Lueders - Will the fee displace users to a free area- pushing people to another area that's undeveloped without services? Can you clarify the additional amenities under this proposal? Is that trash removal and clean up after snow events?

Sara Husby - Is there a cap per day for these permits? How do you enforce? Can visitors change the date of the use?

Karina- There are signs pointing people to where adventure passes are sold- we have local vendors- local convenience stores, gas stations, liquor stores, etc. If someone shows up and parks and doesn't have a pass, FS staff will provide a \$5 notice of fee, which is the same price as the pass, and visitors can either mail an adventure pass, or check or cash in the envelope provided. Staff is there to explain, often in Spanish.

This site is a lower elevation site which doesn't have snow as often or as long as the higher elevations. This year being a drought year for example, we didn't have any snow play here. We offer these additional amenities when they are needed. People will usually go to the furthest place/highest elevation where there's nice snow to play with instead of these lower elevations that might become muddy. Currently, Kern County public works plows the main road only, the forest plows the Forest Rd. and parking area to allow for snow play amenities.

With this implementation, we could continue to provide additional amenities including ordering additional port-a-potties, additional trash services, recreation and fire staff to help clean up after a busy snow play weekend. We do additional toilet pumping of our vault toilets so that more

public could use it year-round.

Our passes are physical. We don't get very many passes or people using recreation.gov.- we are a mountain community that has horrible service, so we rely heavily on physical passes, so there's no cap on online. There are challenges with areas being a little more congested having to redirect people to different snow play areas to get them/keep them out of major roadways. We've never run into the issue of having to refund people because they weren't able to use their pass.

Karina noted that one of the members of the collaborative was online as a member of the public, is this a good time to invite his comment?

Matt invited members of the public to raise their hand for public comment

Michael Karr, Sergeant with the CHP - Karina hit all of the points. This area is near and dear to my heart- I grew up in Mount Pinos area and currently live there. Very involved with the traffic coordination and seen the progression over the years. Social media is putting out more information about snow and that increases our traffic problem. Like Karina said about 5,000 people come up.

We estimated quite a few years ago that there were only around 3,200 or so parking spots and that was absolutely everywhere in the whole mountain area. People are coming in and out throughout the day, but traffic jams occur on the two-lane roadway and emergency personnel can't get through which can have a domino effect. If we have more staff and ability to help the situation (the situation could be many different things), having more personnel from the Forest Service, from the Highway Patrol, from all entities could be a big help. A lot of piles of sleds and broken sleds end up where cars can't park and then it causes a traffic jam. It is a big safety issue, and we do want to preserve life and property as well. So, I think what Karina is proposing could be a step in that domino effect process to help this vastly. We're not up in the bigger mountain areas, but we do get snow at like the higher elevations and it inundates us. We do need other avenues to help us.

No other member of the public asked to be recognized.

Todd- clarified that FS operations are different than CA state operated snow parks. He also acknowledged there was a letter submitted on behalf of two organizations and wholeheartedly apologized to those two organizations for delaying a response. That letter sat in my inbox for months before I got around to it. Apologies to the forest for delay. Apologies to those organizations. We have corrected that and submitted response letters to those organizations and have provided those letters to this body. I believe we're able to address those concerns in that letter. Lastly, FS doesn't have a whole lot of these snow play areas across the agency-some here and there. We even have one in in New Mexico and it's a similar circumstance where we don't get a whole lot of snow, but when we do, people just flock to these areas and we have to ramp up our response to it with additional staff, additional toilets, trash removal, etcetera.

Matt Kingsley asked for a motion. Nancy Muleady Mecham made a motion to recommend approval for the proposal as presented. Sara Husby seconded the motion. All voted in favor, Andre Sanchez recused himself from the vote. The motion passes unanimously.

Matt Kingsley turns the time to Gabe Garcia for presentation on Executive and Secretarial Orders.

Executive and Secretarial Orders Gabe Garcia

Gabe explained that typically, the President will sign an executive order (EO) and then the secretary will reinforce that with a secretarial order for some specific agencies. He highlighted some of the orders that impact the BLM Central California District.

EO on energy and specifically to oil and gas and domestic production.

National Emergency Energy Emergency is Secretary Order 3417. The Department of Interior is going to immediately identify emergency authorities available to facilitate the identification of permitting, leasing, development, production, transportation, refining, distribution, exporting and generation of domestic energy resources and critical minerals.

Gabe noted that in Central California the oil production in Kern County is specifically in the Bakersfield Field Office. As a result of these orders, the field office is trying to see where there's areas where we can streamline or make things more efficient. We're completing reviews of existing rules and guidance to identify anything that can help with that streamlined effort. We're reviewing resource management plans with high energy development and impact and potential. We're working on some supplemental Environmental Impact Statements in Bakersfield and the Central Coast field offices- specific to the oil and gas leasing programs. We are currently doing a review of those plans to ensure we're leasing in the right areas- we're expecting those Notices of Intent to be out here in a couple of weeks, so the public will have the opportunity to comment. During a 30 day scoping phase and then we're hoping to have a draft document on both of those plans sometime this fall and then we'll have another comment period along with some public meetings. The other highlight here is the EO 142225 calling for immediate expansion of American timber production. We are coordinating with our counterparts at the Forest Service, which is ongoing; then assess timber sale targets scheduled between this year and all the way out to 2029. We're taking initial steps now and adding to what we already had in the pipeline, which we have 8 to 10 projects in the queue right now. The Case Mountain area that we visited before on RAC meetings, has a potential timber sale there in the next 6-8 months as long as we can get some road work done, as we've talked about. Mostly salvage timber out of there- timber damaged by the Coffee Pot fire. Getting those trees felled and hauled out. Potential for some green timber in that area as well. There are a number of places throughout the district and throughout California that we're going to be looking at for timber sales. We've got a plan that leads us out at least three years currently, but we're going to expand on that moving forward.

Matt Kingsley opened it up to RAC members for discussion.

Mary Boblet - Can we provide comments on EO 14225?

Gabe- I think we would take comments on specific projects that have to go through the public process/ NEPA. Case Mount in particular, we already went through the NEPA process. It would be that regular process, there's nothing in these executive orders that has limited that. I think it's asking us to look at ways we can become more efficient and make it a priority.

Bob Schneider - Suggests when talking about taking more timber, it might be advisable to say as you did, that it is not going to change how we're doing those processes. It's important to clarify for people that you're not just clearcutting a section or something. Also talk about replanting and how that might or might not be done. What species you know may change. Generally speaking, the forests we see now will not be the forest of the future. Diameter/size issues sometimes are a question too. I'm just suggesting in your presentations that you can alleviate red flags by including more information.

André Sanchez - With some of the executive order language, it's clear that there is a big directive to ensure that categorical exclusions are implemented as part of the streamlining process. That's something that should be shared as part of the transparency.

Gabe - Appreciates the comments- He noted that the EO doesn't establish any new CX's.

Bob Schneider - asked about staffing levels.

Gabe- So you're asking how many folks took the early retirement? So that's the deferred resignation program that was offered to folks in the district. The number of staff that took that is less than 10. I think it's like seven or eight people that took that opportunity. The district has approximately 250 positions total. And right now, we're at sitting at about 15% vacancy rate, which is about 220 people.

Matt Kingsley opened the **Public Comment Period**.

- no public comment offered

Matt Kingsley and **Gabe Garcia** gave closing remarks thanking the RAC for all their work and dedication to serving on the CenCal RAC.

Matt Kingsley Adjourned the meeting

Minutes were chair certified for accuracy on June 12, 2025.