

BLM California Desert Advisory Council

MEETING MINUTES

July 12, 2025

Virtual via Microsoft Teams

For complete meeting discussion, please see meeting transcript.

Desert Advisory Council Members: Randy Banis, Nathan Francis, Hans Haas, Jennifer Henning, Richard Holliday, Terry McGlynn, Steven Reyes, Dawn Rowe, Creed Stone, Ed Stovin

BLM Attendees: Brandon Anderson, Philip DeSenze, Paul Gibbs, Amy Lin, Matt Lohr, Kate Miyamoto, Ron Nuckles, Marc Stamer, Eric Solomon

U.S. Forest Service Attendees: Travis Mason, Amanda Loye, Joanna Wilson, Allison Remley

Guests: Steven Gjerstad, Dave Kuskie, Susan Herring, Chris Ales (captioner)

Opening and Introductions:

- District Manager Brandon Anderson opened the meeting and went over housekeeping items. Brandon introduced BLM employees and U.S. Forest Service employees and turned it over to Randy Banis, DAC Chairperson, to introduce Desert Advisory Council members. Randy welcomed DAC members to provide additional updates or reports.

Morning Break (15 minutes)

When the meeting opened, the DAC did not have quorum, so the agenda was shifted around until members could join to achieve quorum.

Public comment period at 9:30 a.m. PT

(Public comments given orally during the meeting have been condensed and summarized. For full public comments, see meeting transcript)

Randy Banis, DAC Chairperson opened the public comment period. Kate Miyamoto went over public comment period protocols. There were two virtual public comments.

- Steven Gjerstad raised concerns about BLM routes on private land causing trespass and property damage in the Western Mojave Route Network.
- Dave Kuskie highlighted issues with OHV recreation and thanked BLM for their efforts.
- Dick Holliday (DAC member) discussed the need for addressing ongoing issues raised by Steven Gjerstad and presented questions for the U.S. Forest Service.

First presentation: Administrative Orders Overview

- Brandon provided updates on several executive orders impacting BLM, including wildfire prevention, energy production, border security, and mineral production.

Break (10 minutes)

District, Field Office, and Fire Overviews

- Brandon Anderson, acting District Manager, provided District updates on hiring in the District, fire, land acquisition, work on Pacific Crest Trail, and OHV grant updates.
- Field managers from each of the five field offices reported on issues and projects, and fire and fuels provided an update. Full reports are detailed in the meeting transcript.
 - Marc Stamer, Barstow Field Office – Staffing challenges, ongoing projects, and fire management efforts.
 - Matt Lohr, El Centro Field Office – Staffing updates, recreation business plan implementation, and safety initiatives.
 - Ron Nuckles, Needles Field Office – Staffing updates, mining projects update, other project updates, Mojave Trails National Monument plan update, burro gather at Fenner Springs.

The DAC gained quorum with Nathan Francis and Creed Stone joining, and the U.S. Forest Service started their presentation.

Second presentation: U.S. Forest Service San Bernardino National Forest Fee Proposal

- U.S. Forest Service employee Travis Mason presented the San Bernardino National Forest fee proposal including an overview, map of the campsites, planned accomplishments, infrastructure and staff, public involvement and comments received.
- Randy opened DAC discussion on the fee proposal. The DAC members generally supported the fee proposal, recognizing the need for increased fees to maintain and improve facilities and services.
 - Richard Holliday: Raised concerns about the clarity of fee information on the recreation.gov website, particularly the display of fees like "\$10/33," which could be misleading. He also suggested considering a reduced reservation fee for one-night stays to avoid a significant percentage increase for short visits.
 - Jennifer Henning: Asked how the collected fees would be spent and was assured that the funds would go directly back to the forest to maintain and improve the specific sites where the fees were collected.
 - Desirea Haggard: Inquired about the payment methods for first-come, first-served sites and was informed that these sites accept cash and checks at the site itself.
 - Dawn Rowe: Commented on the lack of response from government agencies to the fee proposal, suggesting that the absence of comments often indicates no significant concerns rather than disinterest.

Randy asked for a motion and Desirea Haggard motioned to approve the fee proposal. Jennifer Henning seconded the motion. The DAC voted by category and unanimously approved the San Bernardino National Forest fee proposal.

District, Field Office, and Fire Overviews (resumed)

- Dan Kasang, Palm Springs-South Coast Field Office – Staffing updates, solar project developments, and graffiti removal efforts.
- Phil DeSenze, Ridgecrest Field Office – OHV grant challenges, wild horse and burro management, mining project updates, and passing of a longtime BLM employee.
- Paul Gibbs, Fire and Fuels Program – Staffing updates, notable fires, fire management, fire prevention, and successful hiring recruitment.

Wrap-up and Closing

- Brandon thanked Hans and Jennifer for serving on the DAC, the timeline for a call for nominations, and provided updates on future DAC meetings including only having a meeting if there is quorum and the possibility the November 15 meeting not being held due to losing quorum in October 2025.
- Randy expressed appreciation for Hans and Jennifer's time on the DAC and recognized Craig Beck (BLM employee in the Ridgecrest Field Office who passed away) for all he did for the California desert.

Meeting adjournedA handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read 'Randy Banis', is written over a horizontal blue line.

Randy Banis, Chair
Desert Advisory Council