

**Meeting Notes**  
**Central California District Resource Advisory Council**  
**October 29-30, 2015**  
**Mendocino, CA**

**ATTENDEES**

RAC: Trent Rosenlieb (phone), Blair Knox (phone), Jim Keller (phone), George Armstrong, Mary Gorden, Matt Kingsley, Reb Monaco, Sally Miller.

BLM: Este Stifel, District Manager; Ruben Leal, Associate District Manager; Betsey Schenk, District Fire Management Officer; Dana Wilson, State External Affairs Media Lead; David Christy, District Public Affairs Officer; Steve Nelson, Bishop Field Office Manager; Gabe Garcia, Bakersfield Field Office Manager; Eric Morgan, Acting Central Coast Field Office Manager; Bill Haigh, Mother Lode Field Office Manager; Rich Burns, Ukiah Field Office Manager; Tracy Cline, Ukiah Field Office Resources Lead; Sarah Mathews, Ukiah Field Office Outdoor Recreation Planner.

PUBLIC: Bob Schneider (phone), Jim Gorden, Amy Wynn (Central Coast Planning), Roxanne Wehren.

**GENERAL BUSINESS**

Minutes of the April 2015 meeting were approved.

Sally Miller was elected chair and Matt Kingsley was elected vice chair.

Este Stifel reported on state/national issues: Neil Kornze is the BLM Director; Steve Ellis, Deputy Director for Operations; and Linda Lance, Deputy Director for Programs and Policy. In California, State Director Jim Kenna welcomed Joe Stout as the new CA Associate State Director in May. Jim Kenna retired in early October. Jerry Perez, OR-WA State Director, will report in January as CA State Director.

ACTION: Try to schedule the State Director or Associate State Director to attend the next RAC meeting.

President Obama requested \$1.2 billion in appropriations for the BLM for Fiscal Year 2016. The request for BLM's operating accounts represents an increase of \$91.4 million above the 2015 enacted level. Four priority funding areas include:

- Supporting and Modernizing Management of Increased Energy Production
- Restoring Sage Grouse Habitat through Partnerships and Collaboration
- Supporting the BLM National Conservation Lands, American's Newest Conservation System
- Establishing a BLM Foundation

In the last fiscal year, the BLM generated over \$5 billion in receipts from public lands, benefiting State governments and the U.S. Treasury.

State Director Jim Kenna conducted Congressional visits in Washington DC in May and met with 18 members of the CA delegation. Issues included energy production, conservation, sage grouse and recreation.

There has been legislation introduced of interest to California including the California Coastal National Monument Expansion (Department of Interior supports), Desert Monument designations, Clear Creek Management Area National Recreation Area, Alabama Hills National Scenic Area (DOI supports) and drought relief.

The RAC discussed the Desert Renewable Energy Conservation Plan. Matt Kingsley, an Inyo County Supervisor, said there is a problem with renewables in CA getting local governments to step up to the plate when they don't see a benefit. For example, Inyo County could create an incentive program for rooftop solar, but rooftop solar doesn't count toward the state 50% renewables goal.

Este Stifel said the district budget is down a little and it's challenging to fill positions. In the last 3-4 years, Cencal has lost 20-40 FTE.

She attended state Off-Highway Commission meetings in September and October. The general comments during the meetings were in opposition to monument designations in the desert. Commissioners are concerned about the loss of OHV areas in the desert and generally favor proposed desert legislation, but don't see either bill as perfect. Commissioners strongly support the Clear Creek NRA legislation. The International Education Research Foundation submitted a draft of testing results at Clear Creek to the state OHV Division. The full report is expected next spring. Reb Monaco asked BLM to keep the RAC informed on Clear Creek issues and legislation.

#### **PUBLIC COMMENT**

Bob Schneider (Tuleyome) said he is concerned about the BLM budget.

ACTION: Send interested parties a copy of the agenda before RAC meetings.

He has seen sprouts coming out of some trees following the fires in the Berryessa area.

BLM needs to provide roads for OHV users in Knoxville.

Tuleyome has a number of new initiatives and is working in a Headwaters Partnership.

Tuleyome is working to purchase land north of Highway 20 along the North Fork of Cache Creek to provide a half-mile riparian habitat corridor. Tuleyome also is working with the Blue Ribbon Coalition on OHV issues.

#### **NEXT MEETING**

The next meeting will be scheduled in conjunction with the Berryessa-Snow Mountain National Monument dedication, tentatively set for March 19.

#### **ALABAMA HILLS**

Matt Kingsley said Congressman Cook and his staff are engaged in the NLCS designation legislation, either as part of the Desert Bill or as a stand-alone bill.

#### **TEMBLORS**

The Temblors Subgroup is waiting for resolution on the Bakersfield Resource Management Plan. Gabe Garcia said BLM met with the Taft Community about 1 1/2 years ago regarding the

temblors. An issue is public access. People are going through private land to access the area. Private landowners are concerned about liability with public access.

#### CALIFORNIA COASTAL NATIONAL MONUMENT

Este Stifel said David Ledig, Monument Manager, had a good year working with numerous parties. He is looking at the possibility of a Monument Friends Group. Ledig, BLM Ecologist Jim Weigand, and other BLM staff worked on the Refugio Oil Spill near Santa Barbara. All the coastal field offices supported various monument projects. Proposed legislation would add areas to the Coastal Monument including Piedras Blancas Light Station and Coast Dairies in Cencal. Some residents around Coast Dairies have expressed concerns about adding it to the monument based on increased visitation and traffic, trash and emergency services.

Reb Monaco said Piedras Blancas has limited public access due to its size. Gabe Garcia said BLM is talking to CalTrans about additional parking with the realignment of Highway 1. BLM and State Parks also are exploring possible pedestrian access from Elephant Seal Beach.

Reb Monaco said the RAC has supported access to public lands.

Amy Wynn said there are large tracts along the Coast that farming families are interested in selling. Rich Burns said the Biaggi family is interested in a conservation buyer for land south of Elk. There would need to be bond money available for the state to purchase it. For BLM, it would take three to five years to go through to process for possible Land and Water Conservation Fund funding.

#### UKIAH FIELD OFFICE REPORT

Rich Burns reported on fires. In the Ukiah Field Office, 65,000 acres burned, 49,000 in the Berryessa-Snow Mountain National Monument. Individual fires were:

- Rocky Fire: 69,000 acres; 48,000 BLM; 34,000 in Berryessa-Snow Mountain National Monument; 20,000 in Cache Creek Wilderness.
- Ragg Fire:
- Jerusalem Fire:
- Valley Fire: 76,000 acres

A pontoon bridge was installed on Cache Creek to provide access during the Valley Fire. The bridge reduced the access time for fire equipment from five hours to 15 minutes. CalTrans, BLM and the Governor's Office are working to get a permanent bridge installed in 2016.

Geothermal power plants were damaged in the Valley Fire and companies are working to resume production. BLM is issuing sundry notices for them to do the work.

BLM is preparing the scoping report for the coastal monument plan amendment. The amendment should be completed in 2016.

AltaGas gave BLM \$50,000 to do a road survey and develop another alternative for substation location for the proposed Walker Ridge wind project.

Planning should be completed for Cow Mountain in Spring 2016. User groups have been more willing to include multiple uses for areas.

Bob Schneider said Tuleyome has started work on a Berryessa-Snow Mountain National Monument trails plan. The plan will look at trails both inside and outside the monument. The Ragg Fire showed a need for trails realignment.

Sally Miller asked about visitor centers for the monument. Winters has expressed interest. Rich Burns said BLM and the Mendocino National Forest are working on visitor centers and other issues. BLM land receives most of the visitation. The University of California, Davis, Stebbins-

Cole Canyon property by BLM land gets about 65,000 visitors annually. Bob Schneider said Tuleyome is looking at ways to broaden the visitation including a Clear Lake visitors center.

### BISHOP CAMPGROUND FEES

Steve Nelson said the last fee increase was in 2005 and BLM has invested \$3.6 million in campground improvements since then. He presented a proposed fee schedule to the RAC. Reb Monaco said the field manager should have flexibility in setting fees and should review fees every 1-2 years. Matt Kingsley Inyo County has gone to automated fee collection where users can pay by credit card and it is working. Sally Miller, George Armstrong and Trent Rosenlieb said the RAC should not micromanage fees and the field manager should have some flexibility.

ACTION: The RAC unanimously approved two motions:

- Field managers should have discretion to adjust fees biannually and should report back to the RAC.
- The proposed fee plan should proceed to the next stage for public review.

### MOTHER LODGE FIELD OFFICE

Bill Haigh said the Butte Fire, which burned 71,000 acres (12,000 BLM), has presented a major workload for the field office. Calaveras County Public Works and the Natural Resources Conservation Service have taken the lead on private lands. BLM is planning to spread wood shreds and rice straw on slopes to prevent erosion, but some slopes are too steep for that to be effective. BLM may offer up to 2 million board feet of timber in salvage sales. Other issues to be addressed include restrooms destroyed in the fire, archaeological sites and mine closures. Fifteen thousand acres were treated to reduce fire risk in the Amador-Calaveras Consensus Community Forest and 2,000 of that burned. CalFire cleared two fuel breaks in the area as part of fire suppression.

At the Cosumnes River Preserve, restoration work was done at Badger Creek/Horseshoe Creek to provide habitat for giant garter snakes. A record number of sandhill cranes have been seen at the preserve this year. A new boardwalk and viewing platforms have been constructed and work is planned at the visitor center.

At the Merced River, the Briceburg Bridge is being renovated.

At the South Yuba River, the road and campgrounds will be improved.

Wild and Scenic River funding cut last year has been restored, so that portion of the budget is up eight percent.

George Armstrong asked about erosion treatments following the fire. Bill Haigh said straw is used on slopes up to 40 percent and wood shreds on slopes from 40 to 60 percent. No material is effective on slopes steeper than 60 percent. Aerial seeding is generally not effective as an emergency measure. Some areas may be seeded later where there was not enough of a seed bank. Matt Kingsley asked about tree mortality as a wildland-urban interface issue. Bill Haigh said that is a major issue in the Sierras. Matt Kingsley asked what happens when a tree on BLM land threatens private property. Bill Haigh said BLM can remove trees, but doesn't have the capacity to handle a lot of requests.

### CENTRAL COAST FIELD OFFICE

Eric Morgan reported on the following items:

#### Fort Ord

### **Dog Management Planning Effort**

On April 8, 2015 the BLM instituted an interim leash requirement across the national monument in response to information released by the Army, EPA and DTSC regarding munitions hazards on BLM lands currently open to the public. The BLM is committed to releasing a draft dog management plan for public review in February of 2016, and a final plan and rule-making in May of 2016. Three public workshops have been held with the community to solicit input, and 92 citizens have voiced their opinions regarding dog management at the monument. The 2007 RMP requires the BLM to prepare a dog management plan at Fort Ord, and this planning effort is an extension of the RMP direction.

### **Guidotti Bridge Replacement**

On October 26, 2015 the BLM opened a new 105 foot long, clear span bridge crossing El Toro Creek near the Badger Hills Trailhead. This bridge replaces a dilapidated, three-spandrel bridge that was constructed in 1908 and was falling into the creek. An interpretive display with 1908 bridge remnants adorns the site to give homage to the former structure. The Federal Highway Administration oversaw the engineering and construction of this deferred maintenance project.

### **Laurles Fire**

From September 19-21, 2015 the Laureles Fire burned 60 acres on the national monument. The fire was started by a vehicle dragging a chain along Highway 68. The wildlife burned on both sides of highway 68 near residential structures. There were no reported injuries or structure damage from the wildfire and the site has been stabilized.

### **Army Prescribed Burn**

As soon as weather and burn prescriptions are met, the Army plans to perform a 500 acres prescribed burn on the Army controlled portion of the national monument. The prescribed burn is part of the Army, EPA and DTSC's munitions response action within the former inland range area under the base-wide Habitat Management Plan. The only lands that have not been transferred by the Army on the former Fort Ord are the remaining 7,450 acres of range areas that are part of the national monument. Those lands will be transferred to the BLM in the next 8 to 10 years.

### Coast Dairies

Field manager has attended seven meetings with local communities of Santa Cruz to discuss BLM implementation of the Interim Management Plan as related to public use, as well as discussing implications of the ongoing National Monument campaign for the expansion of the California Coastal National Monument (CCNM) with the Cotoni-Coast Dairies unit. There are four other units being proposed for inclusion into the CCNM.

In general, according to polling there is a very high percentage support for the inclusion of the Coast Dairies Public Lands into the CCNM in the Santa Cruz/Monterey Bay Region. There is, however, local concern from adjacent landowners regarding level of use that will take place due to Monument status. Currently local residents deal with a lot of traffic and trash associated with the beach use on State Parks land. They feel that monument designation for the uplands would just add to the overcrowding.

During the last twelve months, BLM has provided guided tours of the property with assistance from the Land Trust of Santa Cruz staff and have supported one National Public Land day (NPLD) event building a short segment of trail for future guided tours. PGE provided a generous donation to Conservation Lands Foundation sponsor the NPLD event. Members of the support

our State Parks Organization helped to organize and carry out the event, with California Conservation Corp and BLM leading the work.

BLM will continue to implement the Interim Management Plan. Priorities for the Plan are to secure access points (build and repair gates) and provide interim controlled access for public while the long term plan is developed. If funding allows in 2016, BLM will begin a scoping process for Coast Dairies Long-Term Plan this winter.

### Planning

(1) BLM has prepared a Draft (RMP) Amendment and Draft Environmental Assessment (EA) for southern San Benito and western Fresno counties. Under the preferred alternative, BLM would change the name of the existing “Panoche – Coalinga” ACEC to the “San Joaquin Desert Hills” ACEC based on the distinctive desert ecology of the arid landscape and the associated natural resource values that warrant special management. The proposed ACEC would include all 115,000 acres of BLM-administered lands in the planning area. The ACEC management goal is to (1) achieve the conditions that will satisfy the recovery criteria for delisting of species for the Ciervo Panoche Natural Area; and (2) protect scenic values and important historic, cultural, or paleontological resources.

The BLM-administered public lands in the planning area support rare, threatened, and endangered species of animals and plants. The proposed ACEC also contains the world’s largest known California juniper (*Juniperus californica*), discovered in the Griswold Hills in July 2015. The “Grand Old Juniper” estimated age is between 550 and 700 years.

Cultural resources in the ACEC represent thousands years of human activity and reflect the dynamics of climate change in Central California. Additionally, the Desert Hills ACEC comprises roughly 120 million years of geologic records of the central California sedimentary environment. Other features of the landscape include fossil assemblages dating from the late Cretaceous to the Pleistocene.

The Draft EA is scheduled to be available for public review and comments in Dec. 2015.

(2) As part of a settlement agreement between CBD and BLM, BLM is now preparing an Environmental Impact Statement (EIS) for the planning and management of oil and gas leasing and development on approximately 284,000 acres of surface estate and 793,000 acres of Federal mineral estate. The Draft RMP Amendment and Draft EIS considers five alternative RMPs that address impacts to sensitive resources such as listed species, cultural resources, and water resources by requiring special operational constraints on surface use to protect these resources. In addition, a technical working group has been established to address air quality concerns. The Draft EIS is scheduled to be available for public review and comments in Nov. 2015.

### BAKERSFIELD FIELD OFFICE

Gabe Garcia said filling behind retiring personnel is an issue for the office. Out of 65 FTE, 22 positions are vacant or will be in the next few months. Three of those will be filled soon.

The Bakersfield resource Management Plan, signed in December 2014, established Special Recreation Management Areas at the Temblors, Keysville and the San Joaquin River Gorge.

Public meetings have been held a Keysville and a plan should be released in the next six months with campground and trail locations. There have been some law enforcement problems there on the weekends and the plan will better address the carrying capacity for the area. A fee program may be considered. Bakersfield received a \$300,000 grant from the state OHV Division for

planning. OHV users want access to 2-3,000 acres of the 10,000 acres for a variety of skill levels and a loop system.

ACTION: Send the RAC a map of the planning area.

Oil prices have dropped from \$100 a barrel a year ago to \$45 today, so permitting is down.

About 250 wells were permitted in 2014 compared to 100-150 this year. Most activity has been to maintain existing oil fields. Three orders on oil and gas measurement and accounting currently are in draft.

The Draft Travel Management Plan for Carrizo Plain National Monument is almost done. Three of the seven positions at Carrizo are vacant.

The communications tower at Piedras Blancas Light Station is almost done. BLM is waiting for information from users, but expects to remove the old equipment in the next four to six months.

Ryan Cooper, former recreation planner at Carrizo, is the new Piedras manager. He is working on volunteer recruitment and is holding a volunteer workday once a month. Work will be done at the NOAA/Fish and Wildlife Service building in December. Light station tours now are booked online. BLM signed a Memorandum of Understanding with the Ventana Wildlife Society for researchers to stay at Piedras while conducting condor surveys.