

Northwest California Resource Advisory Council

Meeting and Field Tour
Thursday and Friday, Oct. 24-25, 2013
Point Arena, California

Summary Minutes

October 24

Opening Business

The meeting convened at 10 a.m. at Point Arena City Hall, with Michael Kelley chairing.

Attendance

Category One: Stan Leach. Absent: Dennis Possehn, Eric Lueder, Alan Abbs.

Category Two: Ryan Henson, Michael Kelley, John Bernstein. Absent: Bob Schneider.

Category three: Pat Frost, Tony Shaw. Two vacancies.

There are no majorities present in categories one and three, and therefore, no quorum of the advisory council.

BLM Staff: Northern California District Manager Nancy Haug, Arcata Field Manager Lynda Roush, Redding Field Manager Jennifer Mata, Ukiah Field Manager Rich Burns, District Public Affairs Officer Jeff Fontana.

Guests: Point Arena Mayor Doug Burkey.

Approvals

The agenda was approved. The minutes from the last Northwest RAC meeting were approved. The combined RAC meeting minutes were approved with corrections provided (written) by Tony Shaw.

Leadership Reports

State Director's Report: Nancy Haug presented the state director's report:

On behalf of BLM California State Director Jim Kenna:

- I again want to express my sincere appreciation to all RAC members for your service and contributions to the BLM-managed public lands throughout northern California. The remaining

of Fiscal Year 2013 and Fiscal Year 2014 will be challenging and rewarding, and I appreciate your commitment to work as advisors to the BLM as we share ideas and work together to manage, protect and promote our public lands.

- Budget – For the remainder of Fiscal Year 2013, we will continue to operate under a continuing resolution through September 30, 2013.
- American Taxpayer Relief Act of 2012: For the past year BLM California has strategically been planning how to minimize potential impacts resulting in possible budget reductions and the across-the-board spending cuts known as sequestration. As a result, BLM employees will not be furloughed. However, budget reductions will impact most, if not all, BLM programs. Therefore, we will continue to strategically realign our workload priorities to ensure we achieve state and national mission-critical goals and objectives, while balancing budget reductions with realistic reductions in workload capabilities.
- Congressional/Legislative Update: The 113th Congress includes several new House members from throughout California. I made initial contact with some of our new members and will schedule follow-up visits in Washington, D.C. the week of June 17 to provide more detailed information about the BLM and BLM-managed public lands within their respective Districts. I also will brief BLM Washington Office and Department of the Interior officials on major BLM California programs and initiatives.

Several legislative proposals involving public lands in California died in committee after they were not acted upon before Congress convened in December. The BLM will keep you informed should any of these bills be reintroduced.

- Youth: BLM California and the California State University, Chico, hosted youth summits in northern and southern California to strengthen public lands partnerships to educate, engage and employ underserved, youth. More than 60 local, state and Federal agencies, educational and non-government officials attended the summits. The BLM developed and as funding allows, will implement a three-year plan to develop Field School partnerships with other Federal agencies and educational institutions to expand youth employment opportunities.
- BLM California's Strategic Framework: BLM California has three business lines: Sustainability, Heritage, and Community, set upon a foundation of Operational Excellence and our Core Values. Each business line expresses three outcome goals that outline long-term direction and desired results for public land management, and set workload priorities across programs in support of BLM's mission to sustain the health and productivity of public lands for the use and enjoyment of present and future generations.

Central California District

- **Coastal Collaborative:** The Coastal Collaborative is a joint endeavor between the BLM, California Natural Resources Agency and coastal gateway communities to conserve California's coastal landscape and promote sustainability and economic growth. Expanded gateway partnerships will develop strategies to integrate tourism and coastal protection.
- **BLM Postpones California Oil and Gas Lease Sale:** Due to budget constraints resulting from the sequester and an emphasis on the higher priorities for conducting Inspection and Enforcement on existing leases and processing new Applications for Permit to Drill, the California State Office of the BLM has postponed all oil and gas lease sales in California for the remainder of Fiscal Year 2013 (September 30, 2013). The BLM had tentatively scheduled a competitive oil and gas lease sale on Wednesday, May 22, to offer four parcels that encompass approximately 1,278 acres of public lands in Fresno and Kern counties.
- **Federal Judge Determines BLM National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA) Analysis for Oil and Gas Leases Inadequate:** On March 31, 2013, Paul S. Grewal, United States Magistrate, U.S. District Court, Northern District of California, San Jose Division granted a motion by the Center for Biological Diversity (CBD) and Sierra Club that the BLM's environmental assessment for its September 14, 2011, oil and gas lease sale was inadequate, violated the NEPA, and did not adequately consider potential safety and environmental impacts resulting from hydraulic fracturing. Grewal's decision also granted in part the BLM's motion that the terms of the lease sales issued did not violate the Mineral Leasing Act claims. Grewal also determined an environmental impact statement was the proper form of the NEPA. At the September 2011 lease sale, the BLM auctioned four parcels encompassing approximately 2,700 acres of public land in Fresno and Monterey Counties. Grewal approved a Stipulated Request to Set Briefing Schedule on the Remedy, which was submitted to the Court by Plaintiffs CBD and Sierra Club and the Department of Justice representing BLM California and Sally Jewell: June 3, Plaintiffs file their opening brief; June 25, Defendants file their response brief; and July 9, Plaintiffs file their reply brief. A Case Management Conference is set for May 28.
- **Public Safety - Marijuana Eradication Operations in California:** BLM California is part of a multi-agency task force of Federal, state and local law enforcement agencies committed to eradicating illegal marijuana gardens on Federal, state and private lands in California. Garden cultivators destroy natural resources and represent a danger to anyone who accidentally finds a garden. The agencies invest tens of thousands of dollars annually to eradicate and rehabilitate garden sites, remove tons of trash, restore access, and protect public safety.

California Desert District

- **Renewable Energy Update:** The BLM has authorized 17 wind, solar and transmission projects in California since 2009, and is amending the right-of-way grant for two additional solar projects, as a result of change in technology. Once operational, these projects will have the capability to produce almost 5,000 megawatts, supply electricity to tens of thousands of California households, create thousands of construction and permanent jobs, and contribute millions of dollars to local, county and state economies.
- **The Desert Renewable Energy Conservation Plan (DRECP)** The Renewable Energy Action Team, a collaborative effort between the California Energy Commission, California Department of Fish and Game, the BLM and U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, is preparing the DRECP. The Plan will protect and conserve desert ecosystems while facilitating development of renewable energy on Federal and non-Federal lands throughout southern California. The draft is scheduled for public release in the summer of 2013.
- **BLM Authorizes Proposed Wind Energy Project in Southern California:** The BLM has approved and issued a right-of-way grant to Alta Windpower Development, LLC to construct, operate, maintain and decommission a wind energy generation facility capable of generating up to 153-megawatt of power. Fully operational, the facility will produce enough electricity to power up to 45,000 homes. The project would be located approximately three miles northwest of the Town of Mojave and approximately 11 miles east of the City of Tehachapi and will encompass 1,999 acres of public lands. Alta Wind, LLC also submitted use permit applications to Kern County for an additional 593 acres of private land, for a total size of 2,592 acres.
- **Military Withdrawals –** The DoN/USMC, in consultation with the BLM and Department of the Interior (DOI), drafted legislation for the DoN’s proposed 25-year renewals of current withdrawals for the China Lake Naval Weapons Station and the USMC Chocolate Mountain Aerial Gunnery Range that will expire October 30, 2014, and a withdrawal expansion of the USMC Marine Corps Air Ground Combat Center (MCAGCC) at Twenty-nine Palms, CA.

The National Defense Authorization Act for Fiscal Year 2014 (H.R. 1960) was introduced last month and referred to the House Armed Services Committee. H.R. 1960 included provisions to renew the China Lake and Chocolate Mountain military land withdrawals and expand the Twentynine Palms withdrawal. Several amendments to the legislation have been introduced that would remove the withdrawal provisions and replace them with provisions that would:

- Transfer BLM lands within the China Lake withdrawn area to DOD
- Transfer BLM lands within the Chocolate Mountains withdrawn area to DOD
- Designate the Johnson Valley National OHV area and transfer BLM lands in the “Southern Study Area” to DOD

The House Armed Services Committee, chaired by Rep. Buck McKeon, is scheduled to meet on Wednesday, June 5 to consider the proposal.

- **BLM Releases Business Plan for Imperial Sand Dunes Recreation Area (ISDRA):** On May 31, the BLM released the 2013 Final Business Plan for the ISDRA. The plan contains the overall financial strategy for managing the ISDRA, including a proposal for adjusting fees to sustain current levels of emergency medical services, search and rescue, law enforcement, and maintenance necessary for visitor safety in the recreation area. The proposed adjustments for off-site sales would increase weekly fees by \$10 and season permits by \$60. The new proposed off-site weekly fee would be \$35 and the season permit would be \$150. Fees would be eliminated from April 15 through September 30, shortening the fee season. Under the proposed business plan, fees would contribute about two-thirds of the revenue needed to manage the recreation area. The remaining funds would come from annually appropriated Federal funds and grants from various sources. The public is invited to comment on the plan through Sunday, June 30. Following the comment period, the plan will undergo a final internal review. The BLM anticipates presenting the business plan and fee proposal to the Recreation/Resource Advisory Council or the Desert Advisory Council in August and finalizing new fees in time for the 2014 season beginning October 1.
- **Imperial Sand Dunes Recreation Area (ISDRA) Resource Area Management Plan (RAMP) and Record of Decision (ROD):** The BLM has worked closely with the California State Historic Preservation Officer (SHPO) in accordance with the State-BLM Consultation Protocol, and recently received a letter of concurrence from the SHPO regarding the RAMP. The BLM is in the process of finalizing the ROD to include additional information requested by the SHPO to address their concerns regarding consistency with existing/ongoing planning efforts, methodology, data inconsistencies, and impacts on cultural resources. As a result, the signing of the ROD may be delayed several weeks.
- **Blade Falls off Turbine at Ocotillo Express Wind Project, Imperial County, CA:** Pattern Energy notified the BLM on May 16 that a blade had detached from a turbine rotor. No one was injured and the blade did not damage any sensitive biological or archaeological resources, personnel, property or the environment. Pattern is conducting a comprehensive investigation of the incident, and has shut down all turbines in compliance with the BLM Notice of Temporary Suspension of Operations. A team of representatives from an independent engineering consultant (WINDProve) traveled to the blade manufacturing facility to review the manufacturing process and discuss corrective actions for the Ocotillo turbines. The BLM and Pattern Energy are conducting daily discussions to review ongoing inspection activities.
- **BLM District Advisory Council Public Meeting Scheduled in June:** The BLM California Desert Advisory Council (DAC) will hold a business meeting on Friday, June 7, from noon to 4:30 p.m. at the Jawbone Station Visitors Center, located at Highway 14 and Jawbone Canyon Road, Cantil, California. The DAC will meet in formal session on Saturday, June 8 from 8 a.m.

to 4:30 p.m. at the Carriage Inn in Ridgecrest, California. Both meetings will be open to the public. Agenda topics for the Saturday meeting will include a status report on the West Mojave Plan, and updates by Council members, the BLM California Desert District Manager, the five Field Managers, and council subgroups. Finalized agenda items are posted on the DAC web page at <http://www.blm.gov/ca/st/en/info/rac/dac.html>.

District Manager's Report: Nancy Haug highlighted the following Northern California District issues:

- There is a focus on developing a workforce plan to absorb budget reductions and accomplish work. There are no plans to terminate employees, but each vacant position is carefully considered with an eye toward zoning and other cost saving measures.
- Personnel: Associate District Manager Richard Raione has taken a new forest service job. The position will be filled.
- A draft EIS to amend land use plans to incorporate sage grouse conservation measures will be released Nov. 1 for a 90-day public comment period. The amendments are intended to increase sage grouse habitat protection with a major focus on priority habitat. The Fish and Wildlife Service will determine in 2015 whether the bird should be listed under the Endangered Species Act. Public meetings are Dec. 3 in Cedarville, Dec. 4 in Susanville and Dec. 5 in Reno, with more meetings to follow in Nevada communities.
 - There was discussion about ongoing monitoring about impacts of the Rush and Lost wildfires on sage grouse habitat.
- Fire recovery efforts are continuing on the 2012 wildfires on the east side of the district. The recent fire near Cloverdale impacted about 500 acres of public lands managed by the Redding Field Office.
- The wild horse and burro program continues to face challenges, though there are no roundups immediately planned. Gathers are limited to horses in distress at this point.

Trinity Collaborative

Redding Field Manager Jennifer Mata, with assistance from RAC member Pat Frost, updated the group on recent developments with the advisory group that is involving multiple agencies and local government.

- There are groups focused on economic development and recreation and agriculture, and one focused on forestry.
- The forestry subgroup is still forming and developing a common knowledge baseline. Field tours, including one to the BLM's Weaverville Community Forest, have been held, and the group is increasing its knowledge about stewardship contracting. There have been discussions about forest plantation management.
- Pat said the effort is gaining momentum and has the support of the Board of Supervisors. The Forest Service and the BLM are participating and strongly supportive.

Jennifer noted the group is focused on education, finding ways to participate in agency projects already underway, and helping with long-term and short-term planning regarding natural resources.

Michael Kelley suggested that a future agenda items should focus on the national significance of the Weaverville Community Forest model and the role of stewardship contracting.

Jennifer and Pat noted that the Trinity County Resource Conservation District and the Watershed Coordinating Center are facilitating the effort that is focused on a mutual effort to improve economic conditions. The group regulates itself well and has had good facilitation from Humboldt State University.

Public Comments

There was no one present to address the council during the public comment period.

Discover the Coast

Jeff Fontana and Lynda Roush updated the council on the initiative to highlight community successes and state/federal partnerships in managing coastal resources.

During the last meeting we discussed the BLM initiative called the California Coastal Collaborative. It is an effort to build upon the partnerships involving the BLM and state agencies, including State Parks and the California Department of Fish and Wildlife to provide seamless natural resource management and public service along the coast.

This is an outgrowth of the management partnerships that have long been in place and formalized over a decade ago when state parks and the state wildlife agency become core managing partners in the California Coastal National Monument. Additionally, in the Northern California District, Fish and Wildlife and State Parks work closely with the BLM at areas such as the Headwaters Forest Reserve and the Mike Thompson Wildlife Area at the South Spit.

Highlights:

- An outgrowth of this collaborative is "Discover the Coast," a series of events designed to celebrate in special events our coastal resources.
- The events had been planned for this week, the length of the coast, but have been pushed back to next year, when we will have monthly events.

Events include:

- **Trinidad:** We will work with the community and the Coast Guard to celebrate the pending transfer of the Trinidad Head Light Station -- not the well-known memorial lighthouse -- from military to public ownership. This will provide much improved public access to this small lighthouse perched dramatically on a cliff nearly 200 feet above the ocean. The Trinidad Gateway Committee, tribes, schools and others will be involved.

- **Point Arena:** The community will celebrate acquiring more public lands adjacent to the community of Point Arena and vastly improved public access. With this acquisition, people can now hike 12 miles from the city all the way to Manchester State Beach on public lands. There are many partners including the Conservation Lands Foundation and Trust for Public Lands working on this one.

- **Fort Ord or Davenport:** An event will focus on public land improvements at the Fort Ord National Monument, or if the situation presents itself, on acquisition for public ownership of property near Davenport known as Coast Dairies. The situation is still developing and more will be announced.

- **Piedras Blancas Light Station (south of San Simeon):** We will celebrate with our partners' reconstruction of a historic water tank that was moved from the BLM Lighthouse Ranch property in the Arcata Field Office jurisdiction to the light station property. The tank has been restored to its accurate historic appearance and now houses emergency communications equipment for the California Highway Patrol. This will improve emergency communications for the CHP and benefit public safety.

- **Southern California:** An event is planned for Point Vicente on the Palos Verdes Peninsula. Prior to the rescheduling, we had planned on participating with a local aquarium festival that attracts thousands of visitors. We will be working with the community on a new celebration.

The BLM and partners will conduct extensive outreach, including a concentrated social media campaign to encourage people to attend these celebrations and join with their communities, the BLM and other agencies in conserving coastal resources.

Land Use Planning

The field managers updated the RAC on the status of land use planning efforts.

Redding and Arcata: The field offices received \$200,000 in funding to begin the pre-plan effort that will lead updating resource management plans. The Redding Field Office also received \$20,000 for transportation planning. The goal for this year is to finish the preplan, including a revision of the schedule. The Redding office will need to hire a planner, probably in a four-year term position. Scoping and other analysis will probably be delayed until next year.

The Arcata and Redding field offices are on similar tracks.

Travel management will be a key issue for both offices. They will look at coordinating on contracts for planning expertise where possible.

Michael suggested that there should be close collaboration with publics, including the RAC, in developing these plans.

Lynda said the new district RAC will be intimately involved with developing the new RMPs.

There was discussion about the NEPA process and its relationship to the project level work that will follow development of the resource management plans.

Tony suggested that the BLM take advantage of the opportunity to address project level issues in the RMPs where possible and consider using a programmatic approach to enable tiering projects to the RMP.

Further, RAC members present recommended:

- The BLM should ensure that each RMP contains major emphasis on recreation.
- There should be a strong emphasis on public involvement as the plans are developed.
- The plans should address climate change.
- If travel management plans call for removing roads from the field offices' motorized road networks, the BLM should consider other uses of the routes after determining the level of use they can sustain.
- BLM should consider adopting the Forest Service's "Firescapes" model in which fire is allowed to play a natural role in the ecosystem. It could be used on tracts of BLM land adjacent to larger tracts of Forest Service lands.

Further, Ryan Henson suggested that the field offices consider collaborating closely with land conservancies that have acquired lands adjacent to BLM public lands, looking for ways to manage them in a consistent manner.

Lynda noted that the BLM, Forest Service and Fish and Wildlife Service are working collaboratively on Land and Water Conservation Fund requests, looking at how acquisitions fit into the bigger picture of public land connectivity.

RAC Reorganization

Nancy asked RAC members to comment on the pending establishment of a single Northern California District RAC to replace the current Northeast and Northwest California RACs. She encouraged suggestions to ensure effectiveness of the new council.

Stan Leach: Questioned the lack of RAC involvement in the BLM decision to move back into a three-tier organizational structure. He said the RACs have not been in favor of the consolidation. He asked for Nancy's comments on what is expected of the new RAC and wanted to know how Nancy sees the new RAC functioning.

Nancy responded with several points:

- The role of the district RAC will be the same as the roles played by the current councils. The BLM will continue to bring issues before the group for research, debate and recommendations.
- The new RAC will deal with more diverse issues than the current RAC because their focus will be on the entire district. It will work at the same level as the BLM district leadership team, in which field managers become involved in issues outside of their individual offices, providing broad perspectives as issues are discussed.
- Current RAC members will be valuable on the new council, bringing experience and knowledge.
- She agreed the geographic expanse of the district will pose challenges. She will look to the RAC to find the best ways to address widely varying natural resource issues across a wide geographic area.

Michael Kelley: The biggest benefit of the RAC has been dealing with public land issues in areas familiar to the members. There is value in local people providing suggestions. Ryan agreed.

Pat Frost: Subcommittees could be used to address the local issue input need.

Lynda Roush: Equal membership distribution across the RAC region will be important.

Tony Shaw: Shared a concern that there will be no Ukiah area representative on the CenCal RAC (as the Ukiah Field Office joins the CenCal RAC). He said performance standards should be set for the new RAC, and that BLM should consider reverting to a two RAC structure if performance standards for achieving better public participation are not met.

Michael: The RACs need meaningful work, not just receiving reports from the BLM. They need issues to research and recommend upon. There needs to be work between meetings to stimulate interest. He made several other recommendations:

- The RAC and the BLM should look closely at volunteer opportunities on public lands. The RAC could play a strong role in institutionalizing volunteerism as part of the fabric of the BLM.
- The new RAC should meet frequently.
- RAC processes should be transparent. The RAC should be involved in BLM organizational decisions.
- Strong orientation is needed for the new RAC, including a comprehensive packet of information about the BLM and responsibilities of RAC members. Ryan agreed. RAC orientation packages should include detailed information on each field office including its programs and natural resource issues.
- BLM should work hard to get all members to participate in discussions, not just when “they have a dog in the fight.”
- The BLM should consider more strategic scheduling of RAC meetings to dovetail with ongoing community events as a way of encouraging more public participation.

There was discussion about ways to encourage more public participation, including development of messages about what the RAC does and how members of the public could benefit from participation.

Nancy cautioned about conducting RAC business and deliberations through email exchanges between meetings.

John Bernstein: Stressed the importance of carefully framing questions for the RAC to address. This needs to occur when agendas are developed. Michael said RAC leadership and BLM managers should discuss these topics between meetings as they work to develop agendas.

Consensus Recommendation: There was continued discussion about shifting the Ukiah Field Office to the CenCal RAC. RAC members present agreed that the BLM should expand the CenCal RAC to 15 members to ensure adequate representation from the Ukiah (North Bay) region.

In continuing discussion, Ukiah Field Manager Rich Burns explained that the decision to move the Ukiah Field Office from the Northern California District to the Central California District was based on public interest. He said there is high public interest from the Bay Area and Sacramento region in management of Ukiah Field Office public lands, exceeding interest from areas further north in California.

Nancy summarized that a driving issue in RAC reorganization is the desire to create an advisory council that is balanced and diverse, reflecting the social, political, economic and geographic diversity of the BLM Northern California District. Improved efficiencies would be a side benefit.

Field Managers' Reports

Field managers presented summaries of activities:

Ukiah: Rich Burns updated the council on management of geothermal leases, recreation use compliance issues, wild horse adoption compliance work, a backlog of lands and realty work, grazing management at the Stornetta Public Lands, the planned 2014 release of an updated Cow Mountain management plan, work on the County Road 40 low water bridge project, and proposed land exchanges at the Black Forest. He said there is an oil and gas lease sale proposed for Walker Ridge in 2014. Rich also updated the group on the wind energy proposal for Walker Ridge, explaining road alignment and land use issues associated with a proposed intertie location are being discussed.

Arcata: Field Manager Lynda Roush reported on the status of the Prosper Ridge Prairie habitat improvement plan, the King Range Business Plan, Lost Coast Headlands Plan, a proposed bridge project at the Paradise Royale Mountain Bike Trail in the King Range, upcoming construction of mountain bike trails at Lacks Creek, and prescribed burning projects planned for Lacks Creek and the South Spit. She also discussed law enforcement actions related to a large marijuana growing operation that expanded from private land onto public lands at Paradise Ridge.

Redding: Field Manager Jennifer Mata highlighted work a lawsuit involving survey and manage issues (also affects the Arcata Field Office), an ongoing legal issue involving a boundary dispute in the Cattle Creek area, bridge replacement work in the Forks of Butte area of Butte County, a land withdrawal proposal in the Trinity River area and proposed land acquisitions using the Land and Water Conservation Fund. She said the Shasta Cascade Wonderland Association, a tourism promotion group that works closely with the BLM, is working on a new tourism branding campaign focusing on recreational trails.

Member Round Table Discussion

Ryan: A charter member of the RAC, Ryan commended the BLM for its good work and plans to stay involved, though not in a RAC capacity. He said of all the federal agencies, the BLM accomplishes the most with the fewest resources. When he joined the RAC the Sacramento River Rail Trail was the worst public land he'd ever seen; it is now featured on billboards. During his tenure the South Spit was transformed from a homeless encampment to a wildlife management area, Samoa Dunes is well managed and there have been huge improvements at the Knoxville lands. It has been a privilege to help.

Tony Shaw echoed Ryan's sentiments.

Stan Leach: Has enjoyed his tenure on the RAC and commended the BLM for a can-do attitude.

Pat Frost commended the BLM for developing a cooperative management model at the Weaverville Community Forest, and for demonstrating openness and integrity in its response to the Lowden Fire (an escaped prescribed fire) at Lewiston in 1999.

Michael Kelley said he has been honored to serve and to chair the RAC. He said being chairman was the best volunteer job he's ever held. He has been involved with the BLM since 1990 in a partnership involving BLM and the International Mountain Biking Association, and always uses "we" when discussing the BLM.

Closing Business

The meeting was continued to Friday, Oct. 25.

October 25

The council convened at Point Arena City Hall at 9 a.m. for a hiking tour of the Stornetta Public Lands and newly acquired public lands adjacent to the community of Point Arena. There were discussions about management issues and community interest in seeing the Stornetta and Point Arena lands added to the California Coastal National Monument.

The tour concluded shortly after noon.

The meeting was adjourned.

*Summary minutes compiled by
Jeff Fontana, Public Affairs Officer*