

HIGHLIGHTS BARSTOW FIELD OFFICE

**California Desert District
Advisory Council Meeting
February 2013**

Amargosa WSR/ACEC Planning effort

BLM Action: The Omnibus Bill of 2009, signed March 30, 2009, included an approximately 22-mile segment of the Amargosa River in southern Inyo County and northern San Bernardino County within the Wild and Scenic Rivers system. Upon designation, the managing agency has one year to finalize boundaries and three full fiscal years from the date of designation to complete a comprehensive management plan to provide for the protection of river values of these lands, consistent with the Wild and Scenic Rivers Act.

Agencies: BLM, Barstow Field Office

Contacts: Chris Otahal, Wildlife Biologist, Barstow Field Office

Status: Draft boundaries have been established and are being modified during the plan development process. Public Scoping was conducted September 1-30, 2011. Due to overlapping and complimentary management concerns, the Barstow Field Office is developing a joint management plan for the Amargosa Wild and Scenic River (WSR) and the Amargosa River Area of Critical Environmental Concern (ACEC). The Joint Plan completion is currently on hold due to other priority project deadlines, but will be completed by September 2013.

Amargosa Vole Demographic and Disease Study

BLM Action: In 2011, the California Department of Fish and Wildlife (CDFW) conducted a preliminary study to determine the current distribution of the Amargosa vole in the Tecopa area. During those surveys an unknown “orange fungus” infestation was found on many voles. A multi-year study is being conducted to further determine the extent of the fungus infection, the probable vector for the spread of this unknown disease, vole genetics, and vole habitat needs. This is a collaborative study between the BLM, CDFW, US Geological Service, and UC Davis.

Agency: BLM
CDFG

US Geological Survey
UC Davis

Contact: Chris Otahal, Wildlife Biologist, Barstow Field Office

Status: The 2012 effort was mostly funded by the BLM and 2013 funding has been secured by CDFW for the demographic field work. BLM has been working with UC Davis to secure funding for the continuation of the disease study through the Betty White Rapid Response Fund of the Morris Animal Foundation and the National Landscape Conservation System Research Support Program.

Amargosa River Monitoring Studies / Management Actions

BLM Action: The Barstow Field Office is involved in various monitoring studies / management actions associated with the implementation of the draft Amargosa River ACEC/WSR Management Plan including:

- 1) Amargosa Niterwort Population Monitoring
- 2) Sensitive Bird Species Spot Mapping / Cowbird Management Program
- 3) Tamarisk Control Efforts and riparian restoration
- 4) Amargosa Vole – Demographic, Habitat, and Genetic Studies

Agencies: BLM, Barstow Field Office
BLM, State Office
Amargosa Conservancy
The Nature Conservancy
Point Reyes Bird Observatory
US Geological Survey
California Department of Fish and Wildlife
UC Davis
Other Partners

Contacts: Chris Otahal, Wildlife Biologist, Barstow Field Office

Status: The list above represents a summary of the various management studies / management actions which are being carried out in support of the draft Amargosa River ACEC/WSR Plan. These projects are multi-year and BLM is currently working with partners to secure out-year funding for these programs. California Department of Fish and Wildlife just secured funding to continue the Sensitive Bird Species Spot Mapping / Cowbird Management program for the 2013 and 2014 effort as well as funding for publishing the data collected so far in a scientific journal article(s). In March, Chris Otahal will be giving a presentation at the River Crossings: Linking River Communities conference regarding the bird work being conducted along the Amargosa River.

Golden Eagle Movement Study

BLM Action: The Barstow Field Office is cooperating with the California Desert District (CDD) Office in implementing a district-wide golden eagle tracking study. Through a contract with West Virginia University, golden eagles are being captured and fitted with telemetry equipment which will allow us to track and record the detailed movements of individual birds. The data will be used in our analyses of various wind projects.

Agency: BLM
West Virginia University

Contact: Dr. Larry LaPre, District Biologist, BLM CDD Office
Chris Otahal, Wildlife Biologist, Barstow Field Office

Status: The movements of several individual eagles are being tracked within the Barstow Field Office area. As of January 2013, we are gearing up for another field season.

Desert Tortoise Recovery Implementation Team Activities

BLM Action: The Barstow Field Office is cooperating with the Desert Tortoise Recovery office of the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service to implement the Desert Tortoise Recovery Plan. The Barstow Field Office is providing representation for the BLM on the West Mojave Recovery Implementation Team to set recovery action priorities.

Agency: BLM
United States Fish and Wildlife Service
Various County, State and Federal Agencies

Contact: Chris Otahal, Wildlife Biologist, Barstow Field Office

Status: In December there was a multi-agency meeting in which the ground work for the production of the Recovery Action Plan was discussed. The Recovery Action Plan (v.1) will go out for management review (date to be determined), will be reviewed by the Management Oversight Group, and a forum for the public to comment will be provided. Feedback from public comments, actions that have been implemented and new scientific information will be considered in Recovery Action Plan (v.2).

River Parkways Grant Program – Amargosa Wild and Scenic River Trail

BLM Action: Worked with Amargosa Conservancy and The Nature Conservancy to secure a \$250,000 grant to build five miles of trail, trailhead, and remove / restore 25 acres of tamarisk.

Agency: BLM
The Nature Conservancy
Amargosa Conservancy

Contact: Chris Otahal, Wildlife Biologist, Barstow Field Office

Status: Now that funding has been secured by the Amargosa Conservancy, BLM is assisting with the coordination of the implementation phase of the project. A coordination meeting will be held February 1, 2013.

K Road Calico Solar

BLM Action: A right-of-way (r/w) grant for a solar energy generation facility known as Calico Solar was approved and signed by the Secretary of the Interior in October 2010. Subsequently in late 2011, the original holder, Tessera Solar filed for bankruptcy. The r/w was acquired by K Road Power of New York and proposes to construct a 100% photovoltaic facility. The use of the Sterling engine technology is no longer feasible. A Supplemental EIS is necessary to comply with NEPA regulations for evaluation of any new impacts by the change in technology (PV).

Agencies: BLM, Barstow Field Office
California Energy Commission
California Public Utilities Commission

Contacts: Joan Patrovsky, Realty Specialist/Project Manager, Barstow Field Office

Status: An application for amendment to the right-of-way was received in August 2011. The proposed revised solar project will be a 618 MW photovoltaic solar facilities with a smaller footprint. The holder, K Road Power began negotiating with the California Public Utilities Commission on a revised Large Generator Interconnection Agreement (LGIA) in August 2012. The negotiations are taking more time than expected. As a result, K Road has requested a pause on the processing of the application and supplemental EIS by BLM. The California Energy Commission (CEC) received an application for revision of the solar farm in August 2012. However, due to the delay in LGIA negotiations, CEC has placed the application on hold pending resolution of transmission issues. Next update from applicant is expected in late February 2013.

Granite Wind

BLM Action: In 2008, RES North America filed an application for a proposed 70 MW wind farm on public and private land near the Town of Apple Valley, CA. This project would consist of up to 28 wind turbines, a new access road, an on-site substation, a 220kV transmission line, fiber optic upgrades to several SCE transmission lines, and a new SCE substation (Jasper).

Agency: BLM, Barstow Field Office
USFWS, Ventura Office and Pacific Regional Office
County of San Bernardino
California Public Utilities Commission

Contact: Joan Patrovsky, Realty Specialist/Project Manager, Barstow Field Office

Status: Coordination with California Public Utilities Commission on a revised CEQA document and development of a Supplemental Draft EIS for BLM to address the additional impacts with a projected publication in Summer, 2013 including processing of upgrades to four existing SCE r/ws (Pisgah Substation to Gayle Substation) and the SCE Jasper substation, and two SCE easements (connected actions). Original DEIS issued in November 2010. Golden Eagle "Take" permit application filed by applicant on November 1, 2012 (working draft with USFWS). An on-going joint cooperative study by BLM and the University of West Virginia has identified several nesting eagles in surrounding area. A Final EIS is anticipated to be issued by the end of calendar year 2013.

Silurian Valley Wind and Solar Facilities

BLM Action: Processing two energy applications filed by Iberdrola Renewables: 1/ a 200-MW wind farm (67-133 turbines) including a project substation with a new overhead 3-mile long 287-kV transmission line and 2/ a 200-MW solar-PV project, including a project substation with an estimated new overhead 1.5-mile 287-kV interconnection line. Both projects may potentially connect into the LADWP Mead-Victorville line. Project Feasibility, System Impact and Facility studies for both projects have not been completed. Proposed projects are located north of Baker, Calif. and east of State Highway 127 (between Silurian Dry Lake and the Boulder Corridor). Anticipate processing projects jointly under one EIS with separate record of decision (ROD) and two plan amendments to the CDCA Plan.

Agencies: BLM, Barstow Field Office
National Park Service
United States Fish and Wildlife Service

State Historic Preservation Office
Department of Defense (DOD)

Contacts: Joan Patrovsky, Realty Specialist/Project Manager, Barstow Field Office

Status: **Wind:** Revised Plan of Development (POD) and amended application filed in December 2012 and is under review. DOD advises curtailment agreement would be required with applicant to avoid impacts to R-2508 flight corridor. Project area is transected by the Old Spanish Trail and historic T&T Railroad.

Solar: Review of the solar application and POD for a 200-MW solar farm with multiple arrays of PV is underway. Project location is within a Solar PEIS variance area requiring a public information meeting in addition to pre-application meetings.

Abengoa Mojave Solar/Southern California Edison Water Valley

BLM Action: The Barstow Field Office is cooperating with the Department of Energy (DOE) on the permitting of a 350 MW solar trough facility and new SCE substation (Water Valley) being constructed on private lands. The grid interconnection for the facility will travel across public lands upon five different transmission lines.

Agency: BLM, Barstow Field Office
DOE Loan Guarantee/NEPA

Contact: Joan Patrovsky, Realty Specialist/Project Manager, Barstow Field Office

Status: Construction of the Abengoa Mojave Solar facility and the Water Valley substation are well underway. Notice to Proceed (NTPs) for the five SCE transmission telecom upgrades have been issued. Monitoring compliance is underway by biological/cultural and tribal monitors. Expected commissioning completion is April 2013 for the SCE upgrades. Some delays have occurred due to equipment delivery delays. The private solar facility is projected to be fully online into the grid in late 2013 or early 2014.

North Peak Wind Farm

BLM Action: EON Climate and Renewables, Inc. has filed an application for a 120 MW wind farm. This proposed project consists of up to 42 wind turbines, a new access road, an on-site substation, and a 220kV interconnection line to the SCE Desert View Substation. Location borders the Town of Apple Valley, San Bernardino National Forest, Juniper Flats and the OMYA Mine.

Agency: BLM, Barstow Field Office
United States Fish and Wildlife Service
County of San Bernardino

Contact: Joan Patrovsky, Realty Specialist/Project Manager, Barstow Field Office

Status: Application and initial Plan of Development received in January 2013. A review of the documents is underway.

CalNev Pipeline

BLM Action: CalNev Pipeline, LLC has submitted an application to the Barstow Field Office for development of a sixteen inch pipeline for refined petroleum products. The proposed line parallels CalNev's current eight inch and fourteen inch pipelines for the majority of the proposed right-of-way with the major departure occurring to avoid the Mojave National Preserve. The pipeline project will run from Colton, California to Las Vegas, Nevada and includes one additional pump station near Baker, California.

Agencies: BLM, Barstow Field Office
BLM, Las Vegas Field Office
BLM, Needles Field Office
US Forest Service, San Bernardino National Forest
US Marine Corps, Marine Corps Logistics Base, Barstow
County of San Bernardino

Contacts: Rich Rotte, Project Manager

Status: The Barstow Field Office, County of San Bernardino, US Forest Service, Las Vegas Field Office and Needles Field Office are reviewing the comments to the Draft Environmental Impact Statement for the CalNev petroleum pipeline from Colton, CA to Las Vegas, NV. The general conformity process under the Clean Air Act is underway. BLM anticipates publication of the Final Environmental Impact Statement/ Environmental Impact Report by March, 2013.

DesertXpress Enterprises

BLM Action: DesertXpress Enterprises, LLC has submitted an application to the Barstow Field Office for a high speed rail project using proven technology and would be constructed as a grade-separated, dedicated double track, passenger-only railroad predominantly in the median of or immediately alongside Interstate 15 (I-15), adding transportation capacity to the freeway corridor traveling from Victorville, California to Las Vegas, Nevada.

Agencies: Federal Railroad Administration (FRA)
Surface Transportation Board (STB)
BLM, Barstow Field Office
BLM, Las Vegas Field Office
BLM, Needles Field Office
Federal Highway Administration (FHWA)
National Park Service (NPS)
California Department of Transportation (Caltrans)
Nevada Department of Transportation (NDOT)

Contacts: Rich Rotte, Project Manager

Status: The BLM issued a right-of-way on December 19, 2011. To date, DesertXpress Enterprises, LLC has not requested a notice to proceed with construction.

OMYA Direct Land Sale

BLM Action: OMYA Inc. applied for a direct sale of public lands located north of its quarry on private property. This is in response to a settlement agreement and the need to acquire additional lands to expand its mining operation located on private lands. The direct sale is one option that will be considered. Other options may be to allow mill sites under the authority of the mining laws or not allow at all. A direct sale would require a plan amendment.

Agencies: BLM, Barstow Field Office

Contacts: Birgit Hoover, Realty Specialist

Status: The Notice of Intent of the upcoming plan amendment was published in the Federal Register on October 4, 2012. Several surveys need to be conducted to identify the resources for the requested area to be analyzed in the Environmental Assessment.

Old Spanish National Historic Trail Interpretive Auto Tour

BLM Action: The BLM Barstow Field Office archaeological resources staff is developing an interpretive automobile tour for the segment of Old Spanish Trail that spans Las Vegas and Los Angeles. The tour booklet will contain maps, photographs, directions, and descriptive information for the tour points of interest. An interpretive overview of the Old Spanish Trail, structured by theme, will serve as an introduction. Other interpretive elements will include original diary entries, made by men who traveled the Trail 1829-1848, organized by location in correspondence with the map.

Agencies: BLM, Barstow Field Office

Contacts: Amy Oechsner, Archaeologist Technician

Status: The Barstow archaeological resources staff is currently constructing a first draft. BLM anticipates the completion of the first draft in May, 2013. It is anticipated that a final draft will be available for external review later this fiscal year.

West Mojave (WEMO) Monitoring

BLM Action: Collect WEMO data on route condition and record incursions.

Contact: Mickey Quillman, Chief Resources, Barstow Field Office
Shelly Jackson, GIS Specialist, Barstow Field Office

Status: In December 2012 Barstow Field Office personnel completed the collection of baseline data on route condition and incursions within 21 sub-regions. We are currently working with a contractor to develop statistical sampling protocol by February 15, 2013.

El Mirage OHV Area

BLM Action: Improve the condition and accessibility of existing recreation facilities and expand visitor services to include interpretation and education.

Contacts: Rose Beardshear, Interpretive Specialist, Barstow Field Office
Brad Mastin, Outdoor Recreation Planner, Barstow Field Office
Danny Pando, Civil Engineering Technician, Barstow Field Office
Ron Salazar, Maintenance, Barstow Field Office

Status: The Friends of El Mirage submitted a RTP grant proposal for phase two of the Lakebed Bypass Road and the contract for the first phase of the lakebed maintenance is at the district office waiting to be awarded.

Delivery of 100% of the conceptual plans for the Twin Hills Planning Project is scheduled for delivery by the end of February.

The perimeter fencing surrounding the ATV Technical course is now in place thanks to a CCC crew led by Park Ranger Ron Salazar. We are working with the Washington Office through their assistance agreement with NOHVCC (National Off-Highway

Vehicle Conservation Council) to complete the conceptual design for the technical course.

El Mirage OHV Area hosted its' first ASI ATV training for the public in January 2013. Next month we should be ready to start training children. With funds from an OHV Safety/Education grant, an El Mirage Jr. Ranger activity guide will be published. The activities in this book offer a special opportunity for families to explore the El Mirage OHV Area safely and responsibly.

Volunteer Program

BLM Action: Augment the BLM staff with volunteers to accomplish our primary goal of restoring and maintaining the health of the public land.

Contacts: Cecilia Franklin, Volunteer Coordinator, Barstow Field Office
Art Basulto, Park Ranger, Barstow Field Office

Status: The Barstow Field Office continues to have a successful volunteer program with hundreds of volunteers throughout the field office. During President's Day weekend, the Friends of Razor Road will be hosting their third annual cleanup in the Razor Road OHV Area. Volunteers will be participating in a general cleanup of the area, and the BLM will be there to support them in their efforts and provide a Jr. Ranger program for the kids. Plans are underway for another cleanup in Mule Canyon for March. This effort is being spearheaded by a volunteer Jeep club.

Wilderness Activities

BLM Action: Working with Student Conservation Association (SCA) to host All Corps event in the Tecopa and Shoshone Area. Five crews will perform general trail maintenance on the Amargosa River Trail.

Contact: Rose Beardshear, Interpretive Specialist, Barstow Field Office
Brad Mastin, Outdoor Recreation Planner, Barstow Field Office
Tim Williamson, Wilderness Coordinator, Barstow Field Office

Status: Wild Corps and SCA are scheduled to work in the Amargosa area in mid-February.

BLM Action: Juniper Flats Cultural Area

Contacts: Miguel Mejia, Biological Science Technician, Barstow Field Office

Tim Williamson, Wilderness Coordinator, Barstow Field Office

Status: SCA Wild Corps will continue rehabilitating illegal routes, installing barriers, posting signs and information and hosting both formal and informal community outreach events.

Law Enforcement Activities

BLM Action: The Barstow Field Office continues to serve and protect the public lands and the visitors who come to enjoy their public lands.

Contact: Patrick Chassie, Chief Ranger, Barstow Field Office
Joseph Wilcox, Supervisory Ranger, Barstow Field Office
Winson Waterman, Acting Supervisory Ranger, Barstow Field Office

Status: **Chief Ranger Patrick Chassie** has accepted a temporary reassignment to the acting District Ranger position in the California Desert District (CDD) Office. Chief Ranger Chassie is optimistic about building the Law Enforcement Team within the CDD field offices. He is currently working on agreements with several local law enforcement agencies.

Chief Ranger Chassie is a current member of the CDD Special Recreation Permit (SRP) task group and the State SRP task group. The Barstow Law Enforcement team is assisting the CDD and the California State Office with SRP development processes for event protocols in regards to law enforcement issues.

Supervisory Ranger Joe Wilcox will return from leave on January 28th to assume the Chief Ranger position while Chief Chassie works as the District Ranger.

Ranger Win Waterman will be the acting Supervisory Ranger for the Barstow Field Office. His prior law enforcement experience will complement Barstow's current cadre of officers.

Charles Smith started FLETC on January 14, 2013. Upon Ranger Smith's completion of his basic academy training, he will return to Barstow and attend Field Training for several months. Barstow looks forward to having Ranger Smith join our Law Enforcement staff.

Ranger Kevin Maclean and Ranger Taurean Steavens are still in the process of completing an agreement with San Bernardino Sheriff's Office for office space in the Morongo station. This joint working relationship will greatly improve the effectiveness of County and Federal law enforcement actions in regards to urban interface in the

Yucca, Landers and Johnson Valley areas.

Ranger Jeff Weis began his employment with BLM on April 22, 2012. Ranger Weis has successfully completed his training and is tasked with the Dumont Dunes areas of concern.

Ranger Robert Hastey will be retiring this summer. His institutional knowledge of the Barstow Field Office will be greatly missed. Ranger Hastey's replacement is in the back ground process and should be arriving to the Barstow team within a couple of months.

Ranger Alex Trujillo has organized several targeted patrols for the Juniper Flats areas of concern. He continues to function as the court liaison and our weapons armorer.

BLM Action: Special operations at Dumont Dunes.

Contact: Patrick Chassie, Chief Ranger, Barstow Field Office
Joseph Wilcox, Supervisory Ranger, Barstow Field Office

Status: The OHV season at Dumont Dunes OHV Area is in full swing. To date the Barstow Law Enforcement Rangers have successfully staffed four Holiday weekends at Dumont Dunes.

Due to the high visitation, the Barstow Field Office Law Enforcement staff conducted an enhanced patrol of the Dumont Dunes area.

BLM Action: Special operations at Johnson Valley.

Contact: Patrick Chassie, Chief Ranger, Barstow Field Office
Joseph Wilcox, Supervisory Ranger, Barstow Field Office

Status: Johnson Valley has seen numerous SRP events this OHV season, with a large number of recreational riders.

The Barstow Field Office is also preparing to host the 'King of the Hammers' off road competition that will take place in February. Numerous BLM Law Enforcement Rangers will be brought in from around the country to assist with the estimated crowd of 30,000 people.

BLM Action: BLM is seeking criminal penalties and restitution from individuals.

Contact: Patrick Chassie, Chief Ranger, Barstow Field Office

Joseph Wilcox, Supervisory Ranger, Barstow Field Office

Status: Ranger Win Waterman has done an outstanding job working with the Barstow Field Office fire mitigation officer Brian Willbond to investigate fire trespass cases which are on the rise due to illegal shooting. To date, the BLM is seeking over \$300,000 in restitution.

BLM Action: Juniper Flats targeted patrols.

Contact: Patrick Chassie, Chief Ranger, Barstow Field Office
Joseph Wilcox, Supervisory Ranger, Barstow Field Office

Status: The Juniper Flats area continues to be a priority with Barstow Field Office law enforcement. Joint patrols with county code enforcement and sheriff's deputies will continue as funding allows. Public support is greatly appreciated and encouraged in regards to monitoring some of our most sensitive areas. Special thanks to Friends of Juniper Flats for all the work they have done this year. To date, three targeted patrol operations have been successfully conducted. The Barstow Law Enforcement team is looking for an additional UTV to help monitor and enforce sensitive areas.

Twentynine Palms

BLM Action: Public land order

Contact: Katrina Symons, Field Manager, Barstow Field Office

Status: On September 24, 2012 a public land order appeared in the Federal Register. This order withdrew over 330,000 acres of public land (and over 43,000 acres of non-Federal land) from all forms of appropriation under the public land laws, including the United States mining, mineral and geothermal, and mineral materials laws for a period of five years. The withdrawal preserved the status quo of the lands and mineral estate included in the proposed training land acquisition/airspace establishment project of the United States Marine Corps Air Ground Combat Center, Twentynine Palms, California, pending the processing of an application for withdrawal for military purposes under the Engle Act.

NOTE: Website location where the public can find information related to the project for potential Land Acquisition and Airspace Establishment to Support Large-Scale Marine Air Ground Task Force Live Fire and Maneuver Training at Marine Corps Air Ground Combat Center, Twentynine Palms, California:

<http://www.29palms.marines.mil/Staff/G4InstallationsandLogistics/LandAcquisition.aspx>