

HIGHLIGHTS NEEDLES FIELD OFFICE

California Desert District Advisory Council Meeting December 4-5, 2015

Abandoned Mine Lands

BLM Action: The NEFO is actively pursuing inventories, prioritization and closures of abandoned mines that may present a public safety hazard.

Agencies: BLM, Needles Field Office with support from the California Desert District and California Department of Conservation

Contact: Sterling White, CDD AML
Mike Ahrens, Field Manager

Status: Bat surveys and other natural and cultural resource surveys are being conducted as funds and staffing allow for the development of a NEPA document and a possible contract for the closures. Much of the inventory work and bat surveys are accomplished by contractors, staff, and volunteers.

Castle Mountain Mine Re-opening

BLM Action: The NEFO has been contacted by Castle Mountain Mining Company (CMMC) about the possibility of re-opening the Castle Mountain Gold Mine. The mine was operated by the Viceroy Mining Company from approximately 1991 through 2001.

Agencies: BLM, Needles Field Office

Contact: Peter Godfrey, CDD Geologists
Mike Ahrens, Needles Field Office Manger

Status: The NEFO has been in informal consultation with the CMMC since December 2013. CMMC has indicated that they do want to pursue re-opening the mine and that we can anticipate a proposed Plan of Operations (POO) soon. Indications are that the proposed POO will be to initiate operations within the previously authorized foot print of the mine. The NEFO has assembled a small team to offer an initial review of the CMMC proposal and the proposed POO when it is released, and to conduct any necessary environmental review and authorization.

BLM was informed in early November 2014 that CMMC would require additional time to develop their proposed POO due to some new metallurgical survey information that they have received.

First Solar Stateline Solar Farm

BLM Action: Desert Stateline, LLC, a wholly owned subsidiary of First Solar Development, Inc. (First Solar) constructing a 300-megawatt alternating current solar photovoltaic (PV) energy generating project known as the Stateline Solar Farm. The PV generating facility (Solar Farm), the corridor for the Project's 220-kilovolt (kV) generation interconnection (gen-tie) transmission line, and the access road is to be located in western Ivanpah Valley, east of Interstate 15 and northeast of the Ivanpah Solar Electric Generation System project. The project connects to the Southern California Edison (SCE) regional transmission grid via SCE's Ivanpah Substation.

Agencies: California Desert District Renewable Energy Action Team and Needles Field Office

Contacts: Noel Ludwig, Project Manager
Mike Ahrens, Field Manager

Status: Archaeological monitors onsite during construction activities identified an anomaly (charcoal) that could represent a subsurface archaeological resource. A stop work order on that portion of the project was issued, and steps were taken to ascertain if the charcoal is in fact a cultural resource, and if additional subsurface archaeological resources may be present. No rock or bone fragments were discovered through careful excavation of the sites. Seven sites have now been identified and submitted to various analysis including C14 dating, identification of vegetation that was burned, testing phosphate levels to rule out any association with human cremains, and identifying the presence of pollens, lipids, and various chemicals and minerals that could shed light on the nature of the anomaly.

Desert Stateline Archaeological Consulting firm, ECORP Consulting, provided a summary of the evaluation of the anomalies. The evaluation looked at six potential natural causes including Regional Wildfire, Localized Wildfire/Lightning, Secondary Charcoal Deposition, Sclerotia, Pack Rat Midden, and Pack Rat Midden/Open air Pack Rate Houses. The evaluation also looked at eight cultural causes including Cremations, Earth Ovens, Parching in Coals, Charcoal Production, Food Cashes, Single use Hearths or Hearth Clean Outs, Small Mammal Hunting, and Ceremonial Use. BLM is currently reviewing the report and consulting with interested tribes and the SHPO on the reports findings and conclusions.

Ivanpah Solar Electric Generation System

BLM Action: Solar Partners', LLC have constructed the Ivanpah Solar Electric Generation System, a concentrated solar electrical generating facility capable of generating 370 megawatts (MW) of renewable power. The project is located in the Ivanpah Valley, southwest of Primm, Nevada, and consist of three power plants, Ivanpah 1, Ivanpah 2 and Ivanpah 3. Shared facilities include a substation and natural gas pipeline. The three independent power plants and shared substation are co-located on approximately 3,671 acres of Bureau administered public land.

Agencies: BLM, Needles Field Office

Contacts: Mike Ahrens, Field Manager

Status: The long awaited 50 miles of Desert Tortoise Highway Fencing is currently under construction. The ISEGS project was required to fence 50 miles of highway as off-site mitigation for impacts to the Desert Tortoise. This proved to be a complicated undertaking both in design and coordination with all parties. The I15 section between Nipton Rd and Yates Well Rd is complete and the I40 sections from Hwy 95 to Goffs Rd are under construction.

Interconnect Towers, LLC.

BLM Action: Interconnect Towers, LLC (ICT) have submitted applications to construct communication sites along I-40 and I-15. The proposed locations are Blind Hills, Ash Hill, Halloran Springs, Nipton, I-40/HWY 95 junction, and I-40 near Park Moabi Rd. The proposed projects would potentially provide increased cell phone and emergency response services in areas currently deemed as limited

Agencies: BLM, Needles Field Office

Contacts: Mike Ahrens, Field Manager

Status: NEFO continues to work with ICT to complete environmental analysis of the proposed projects.

Partnerships

Chicago Botanical Garden – The NEFO hosted an intern in support of the Seeds of Success program. The program collects native plant seeds which are stored for use in future restoration projects.

Amargosa Conservancy - The NFO and the Amargosa Conservancy (AC) are working together in protective and conservation efforts at Crystal Springs, Wildhorse Spring, and Horse Thief Springs in the Kingston Range. AC has provided cleanup efforts and are “eyes and ears” for the field office in this remote area.

California Trail Users Coalition - The NFO has entered into an agreement with the California Trail Users Coalition (CTUC) to extend their successful map series to include the NFO. This includes the development of a three map series covering our jurisdiction. The project is funded through a grant from the California Off-Highway Motor Vehicle Recreation Division.

All three maps covering the Needles Field Office jurisdiction have been completed and are now available through the CTUC, and the Needles Field Office. The NFO has also initiated a distribution network utilizing local RV Resorts along the Colorado River.

All maps use a comprehensive route network, developed by staff based on the designated open route system for the map series. This network highlights long distance touring opportunities and access to

recreational points of interest. The routes are marked; those with assigned names have been marked with stickers showing the names and numbers that correspond to labels on the maps.

Great Basin Institute – The NFO has entered into an agreement with the Great Basin Institute to provide two interns in support of an OHMVR Grant funded Invasive and Sensitive plant inventory project. The three year project will focus on invasive and sensitive plant species adjacent to our system of roads and trails.

Native American Lands Conservancy (NALC) – The NEFO is partnering with the NALC to support the management of the Old Woman Mtn. Wilderness and the adjacent NALC Old Woman Mtn Preserve. The NEFO supported the NALC in the development of an OHMVR restoration grant to provide restoration and barriers along the borders of the Old Woman Mtn Wilderness and the Old Woman Mtn Preserve. The grant will be administered by the NALC.