

## **HIGHLIGHTS BARSTOW FIELD OFFICE**

**California Desert District  
Advisory Council Meeting  
December 2015 Meeting**

### **Amargosa Vole Demographic and Disease Study, Habitat Enhancement, and Population Augmentation Program**

**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. A multi-year set of studies is being conducted to further determine the extent of disease, vole genetics, and vole habitat needs. A captive breeding effort has also been established. These studies have and will continue to provide information to guide management actions to help prevent the extinction of this highly vulnerable species.

**Agency:** BLM, Barstow Field Office (BFO), California Desert District Office, California State Office and Washington Office  
California Department of Fish and Wildlife (CDFW)  
US Geological Service (USGS)  
UC Davis  
UC Berkley  
Purdue University  
United States Fish and Wildlife Service (USFWS)  
Inyo County

**Contact:** Chris Otahal, Wildlife Biologist, Barstow Field Office

**Status:** Recent results for the trapping efforts indicate that the Amargosa Vole has approximately a 10% chance of being extirpated in the next year, and this rises to a probability of 82% within the next 5 years if immediate management action is not taken. In response to the precarious nature of the Amargosa vole, the Amargosa Vole Team was chartered through the Desert Managers Group (DMG) in April 2013. The purpose of the Amargosa Vole Team (AVT) is to function as a work group to the DMG to provide a collaborative forum for BLM, USFWS, CDFW, and researchers to plan, coordinate, and implement actions that would prevent the extinction of the vole and ultimately result in its' recovery. Chris Otahal is co-chair of the AVT along with Russ Scofield. Due to the extreme vulnerability of this wetland species to extinction, it has become a discussion point in both State and Federal Drought Team reports.

The BFO in partnership with UC Davis, UC Berkeley, and USGS secured a \$25,000

As part of the NLCS Research Support Program grant, a study was initiated in June by BLM and its' partners to help determine the best way to manage bulrush habitat in the marshes associated with the Amargosa Vole. Based on positive pilot study results, a

larger scale clearing effort was initiated this summer. Cleared sites are showing positive results with more bulrush growth being exhibited in the cleared patches and the appearance of new seeding growth. Habitat data is continuing to be collected and analyzed to inform future efforts. BFO has received \$42,000 in targeted funding to continue moving forward on these efforts in FY 2016.

UC Davis, UC Berkeley, and USGS, with support from the BFO successfully secured a Section 6 Grant to provide funding for Amargosa Vole habitat creation on private lands in Shoshone (a location where voles were found historically but are now extirpated). The Amargosa Conservancy has also secured a grant from the Partners in Wildlife Program to provide funding for the installation of a second marsh patch just upstream of the first Shoshone site. The BFO recently conducted a cultural resource survey of the site in support of USFWS' NEPA review of the proposed project. We anticipate beginning ground breaking on habitat creation in Shoshone in 2015.

UC Davis has also initiated a predator study for the marshes used by the Amargosa Vole. The researchers have established several photographic "trap" sites which are documenting the predators using the area. The researchers are also keeping visual records of predators on site. As mentioned in previous reports, the USFWS has provided a \$75,000 grant to USGS to continue habitat studies at Marsh #1 and to start conducting a predator exclosure study to determine effects of predation on voles. Preliminary trapping has been completed and BFO has completed NEPA documents to facilitate moving forward on this project. USFWS has provided additional funding (\$100,000) to extend this project through 2016.

In response to continued detrition of one of the main habitat patches for the vole, the State Office provided \$42,000 in directed funding to initiate an "emergency rescue" program to establish a breeding colony of voles in captivity at UC Davis. The money will provide operational funds for three or more years. As of the writing of this report, 20 animals have been brought into this facility and all are doing well. As of April 2015, the total number of pups has risen to approximately 70. Animals bred in captivity will ultimately be released back into the wild to supplement natural populations as appropriate and act as an insurance population against extinction in the wild. An initial release of 29 voles was attempted in mid-April but was aborted due to technical issues. In June a smaller release of 12 animals was successfully implemented. If all goes well, additional releases in various marsh patches will take place throughout the year. BFO, working with UC Davis, secured a FY 2015 National Landscape Conservation System Science Research grant for \$23,000 to build upon the captive vole release program and keep it funded for FY 2016. These release efforts have received excellent press coverage. There were some initial indications that the released voles had nutritional issues upon release (i.e., several lost weight in the field) and the researchers at UC Davis are working on refined pre-release protocols to address this issue. Therefore, no additional releases of voles are proposed until next spring.

USGS has also received funds from USFWS to look at historic trends in vole habitat change from 1984 to present using LandSat imagery. This project will start soon and will allow us to get a better idea of how habitat has changed over time and potential

impacts anticipated due to climate change.

The BFO worked with the BLM State Office to secure additional funding to expand the earlier genetics work to support the captive breeding program. To this end, BFO received \$65,000 in directed funding for FY 2015-2016 to be used to refine genetic testing of each vole in captivity and sequencing the entire genome for the vole. The individual testing will be used to help inform the release of captive voles into the wild (identify individuals with unique genetics) and the full sequencing will help us evaluate the taxonomy of the species and help evaluate the species susceptibility to disease. Researchers at Purdue University (a new partner) are conducting the sequencing for the project. As of September 2015, Purdue has concluded microsatellite testing on field and captive voles, and full publication of the data will be led by a researcher working on a master's degree at UC Berkeley. BFO has also received funding (\$50,000) to expand trapping effort to see if we can find unusual genetic characteristics in more remote populations to incorporate into the breeding colony and to track individuals released into the wild from the breeding program.

BFO is working with USGS and other Amargosa Vole Team members to compile presentations for the upcoming Western Section of the Wildlife Society meeting in February 2016. These presentations will be part of a larger symposium on Small Mammals of the Mojave Desert.

### **Amargosa River Monitoring Studies / Management Actions**

**BLM Action:** The BFO 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
- 4) SCAN Monitoring
- 5) Fish Monitoring

**Agency:** BLM, Barstow Field Office  
BLM, California State Office  
Amargosa Conservancy  
The Nature Conservancy  
Point Blue  
US Geological Survey  
California Department of Fish and Wildlife  
United States Fish and Wildlife Service (USFWS)

**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.

Bird surveys have been completed for the 2015 season. We have received a report on the focused species surveys – Least Bell’s Vireo and Southwestern Willow Flycatcher on the Amargosa between Shoshone and Tecopa. Based on those results, the Least Bell’s Vireo reproduction rate (25 successful fledging) was at its highest level since monitoring began ten years ago. Southwestern Willow Flycatchers have continued to visit the area, but no confirmed breeding has taken place. An “All Species” report covering additional species is forth coming, as is a report on the surveys on Willow Creek. In FY 2016, BFO received funds (\$32,000) to continue the bird monitoring / cowbird management program.

BFO is working with UC Davis and the Amargosa Conservancy to secure funding through the Disney Wildlife Conservation Fund to support an Outreach Intern. The intent would be that the Outreach Intern would provide public outreach associated with the vole habitat being created on private lands in Shoshone.

BFO received \$12,000 in FY 2016 to continue tamarisk treatment (12 acres) on the Amargosa River. The BLM Fire/Fuels Management Program has committed to treating an additional 66 acres in FY 2016. BFO is also working with the Amargosa Conservancy to treat an additional 22 acres as part of their trail grant. Therefore, BFO intends to treat up to 100 acres this fiscal year, which is the maximum allowable under existing NEPA and USFWS Consultation.

BFO received \$10,000 in FY 2016 to conduct additional fish surveys on the Amargosa River. These surveys will allow some follow-up work with monitoring habitat improvements associated with the Desert Fish Habitat Program grant looking at the response of Amargosa Pupfish and Amargosa Speckled Dace to tamarisk treatment.

The BLM State Office was able to obligate almost \$600,000 in year-end funds for the Amargosa WSR water monitoring program. This funding will be used for:

- 1) Chicago Valley well installation which will provide baseline hydrology data. BFO is working with the State Office on processing NEPA documents.
- 2) Continuation of four Amargosa USGS stream gauges
- 3) BLM’s five-year share of the regional groundwater monitoring network. This network forms the backbone of the USGS work and serves as an early detection system for the Amargosa WSR, Ash Meadows, and Devil’s Hole.
- 4) Five-years of synoptic seepage runs in the Amargosa Canyon that will aid the USGS to determine Amargosa WSR source and baseline flows.

BFO is cooperating with USGS on a study titled: Birds as Indicators of Ecosystem Change in California Deserts: Grinnell Resurveys to Quantify Responses to 20th Century Climate Change and Establish Baselines for Long-term Monitoring and

Conservation. This is a state wide study which will include survey points in and around the Amargosa River area.

### **Amargosa Conservancy (Sperry Wash)**

**BLM Action:** Sperry Wash

**Agency:** BLM, Barstow Field Office  
Amargosa Conservancy

**Contact:** Zachary Pratt, Recreation Branch Chief, Barstow Field Office  
Chris Otahal, Wildlife Biologist, Barstow Field Office

**Status:** On November 3, 2015 Barstow staff, along with Patrick Donnelly and Tanya Henderson of the Amargosa Conservancy, identified locations for placing/replacing route and wilderness signage along Sperry Wash. Also identified a location where fencing might be introduced to stop motorized incursions into a section of the Amargosa Wild and Scenic River. The plan is to meet again in early 2016 to solidify a signing and fencing strategy for the Sperry Wash portion of the Amargosa River.

### **Desert Tortoise Recovery Implementation Team Activities**

**BLM Action:** The BFO is cooperating with the Desert Tortoise Recovery Office of the USFWS to implement the Desert Tortoise Recovery Plan. The BFO is providing representation for the BLM on the West Mojave Recovery Implementation Team (RIT) to set recovery action priorities.

**Agency:** BLM  
USFWS  
Various County, State and Federal Agencies

**Contact:** Chris Otahal, Wildlife Biologist, Barstow Field Office

**Status:** On June 16, 2015, the West Mojave RIT had a WebEx with the primary purpose to prepare for the MOG meeting that was held June 30, 2015. At the previous MOG meeting, RIT's were tasked with providing input on a number of questions, in particular: 1) top priorities for range-wide recovery actions, based on recovery action plans that will provide highest return on investment, and 2) research needs.

The MOG was presented with the following summary information resulting from these RIT discussions:

- Based on a survey sent to all RIT members, highly ranked actions across the Mojave Region included: restoration of habitat; targeted predator control; and decreasing predator access to human subsidies.
- Based on a ranking of the 22 project concepts developed in earlier efforts, habitat restoration, predator control, and highway fencing were most frequently selected.

## **Coolgardie Mesa and West Paradise Proposed Withdrawal**

**BLM Action:** The BLM filed an application for a two year segregation of 10,094.03 acres of public lands for a proposed withdrawal located within San Bernardino County, California. A public meeting was held during the 90 day comment period which ended November 25, 2014.

**Agencies:** BLM, Barstow Field Office  
US Fish and Wildlife Service, Ventura Office

**Contacts:** Katrina Symons, Barstow Field Office  
Liz Easley, California State Office, Lead Realty Specialist  
Joan Patrovsky, Barstow FO, Realty Specialist

**Status:** The notice initiated a two year segregation of public lands from location and entry under the Mining Law, subject to valid existing rights, to allow public comment on the proposed withdrawal. The proposed withdrawal is for the botanical protection of two conservation areas known as Coolgardie Mesa and West Paradise. The Lane Mountain Milk Vetch is a federally listed endangered species found within these conservation areas. This species has a limited geographical range. Casual mining within the withdrawal areas is permitted under 43 CFR §3809.5 as defined under casual use. A public meeting was held on October 14, 2014 at the BLM Barstow Field Office. The public comment period ended November 25, 2014 with a moderate amount of comments received from the public supporting the withdrawal.

A detailed analysis by BLM is currently being conducted, including a mineral potential report, an environmental assessment (EA) and consultation with the USFWS. The withdrawal package is expected to be forwarded to the Secretary of Interior for a final decision in 2016.

## **Soda Mountain Solar Project**

**BLM Action:** The BLM received a right-of-way (ROW) application from Soda Mountain Solar, LLC to construct, operate, maintain and decommission a solar photovoltaic (PV) power plant facility along with the necessary ancillary facilities. The project is proposed on 4,397 acres with the solar field occupying approximately 2,691 acres. The project is located along Interstate 15 (I-15), South of Blue Bell Mine Road, about 6 miles southwest of Baker, California, and 52 miles northeast of Barstow, California. More specifically the project would include solar array fields; access roads; collector lines; a substation with switchyard and interconnection; ancillary buildings; groundwater production, test, and observation water wells; water tanks; a water treatment and storage facility; brine ponds; warehouses; fencing; berms; other infrastructure; and laydown areas. The project would be accessed by the existing Razor and Blue Bell Mine roads. New internal roads would be constructed among collector lines, substation, arrays and sub arrays, and other

ancillary facilities. The interconnection to the proposed substation and collector lines from the arrays would be via underground trench, including underground trenching of I-15.

**Agency:** BLM, Barstow Field Office  
United States Fish and Wildlife Service  
County of San Bernardino  
California State Fish and Wildlife, Natural Resources Division

**Contact:** Jeffery Childers, Assistant Field Manager, Barstow Field Office

**Status:** A Final Environmental Impact Statement was released in June 2015. Four protests were received. A Record of Decision is expected to be issued in the second quarter of Fiscal Year 2016.

### **Los Angeles Department of Water and Power Path 46 Project**

**BLM Action:** BLM is processing a right-of-way (ROW) application to address insufficient ground-to-conductor clearance for transmission lines in order to comply with the California Public Utilities Commission's (CPUC) General Order 95 and/or the National Electrical Safety Code (NESC) Clearance Code Requirements as mandated by the North American Electric Reliability Corporation (NERC) and Federal Energy Regulatory Commission (FERC). The existing McCullough-Victorville (MCV) Lines 1 and 2 and the Mead-Victorville (MVL) Line 1 were installed in the 1930s to transmit power from Hoover Dam to Los Angeles. In most cases, the Los Angeles Department of Water and Power (LADWP) intends to comply with the code clearances by grading the ground surface of the area underneath the transmission lines to achieve height consistency with NERC/FERC requirements. LADWP has identified several locations where grading is infeasible due to topography. In these locations LADWP proposes the alternative of raising existing transmission line towers to achieve height consistency. There are 70 sites with potential clearance issues that will need grading, tensioning, or raising of towers. LADWP is proposing to conduct the work in 2016.

**Agency:** BLM, Barstow Field Office

**Contact:** Jose M Najar, Realty Specialist, Barstow Field Office

**Status:** Biological and cultural technical reports are in progress.

### **California Historic Route 66**

**BLM Action:** Barstow to Needles Corridor Management Plan (CMP)

**Agency:** BLM, Barstow Field Office, Needles Field Office, and California Desert District Office

**Contact:** Doran Sanchez, Partnership Outreach/Development Specialist, Barstow Field Office

**Status:** The BLM California Desert District and California Historic Route 66 Association (CHR66A) released the Route 66 Final CMP for the section of Historic Route 66 between Needles and Barstow, California on Wednesday, July 29, 2015. The CMP was developed with extensive collaboration and coordination with local, city, county, state and federal stakeholders, elected representatives and non-government officials.

Printed/CD copies of the CMP were distributed to CMP stakeholders and interested member of the public. A PDF copy of the CMP is available on the CHR66A website at <http://cmp.route66ca.org>.

This segment of Route 66 is one of the most unique sections of the 2,400-mile long route from Chicago to Santa Monica, with its 128 timber trestle bridges and distinctive landscape, which has changed very little since Route 66 was designated in November 1926. The CMP provides management recommendations regarding how the BLM, CHR66A, state and federal agencies, San Bernardino County, and local communities can work together to protect and preserve historic Route 66, promote sustainable heritage tourism, and utilize adjacent BLM National Conservation Lands and other BLM-managed public lands to enhance economic development opportunities for local communities, San Bernardino County and the State.

Throughout August and September, the Route 66 CMP Team (Doran Sanchez, Glenn Duncan CHR66A President and Lynne Miller, CHR66A CMP Liaison) met with and briefed local, county and state elected officials and stakeholders from San Bernardino County, the cities of Barstow and Needles and the California Department of Transportation on the status of the CMP.

The CMP Team solicited resolutions supporting the CMP and CHR66A/BLM efforts to seek a National Scenic Byway or All-American Road designation for this segment of Historic Route 66 in California from the Federal Highway Administration when the nomination period is announced. A national road designation may provide San Bernardino County and local communities federal funds for road and bridge maintenance and repairs, as well as opportunities to compete for cost share grants for community restoration and revitalization projects. The cities of Needles and Barstow unanimously passed resolutions endorsing the CMP.

Throughout this time, the CMP Team worked closely with San Bernardino County staff to draft a resolution. The draft has been finalized and approved and will be scheduled on the agenda on an upcoming meeting of the Board of Supervisors with recommendations from County officials to approve/support the resolution.

On Monday, September 14, the CMP Team met with California State Senator Connie Leyva and staff. It is anticipated that Senator Leyva will provide a letter of endorsement supporting the Route 66 and the CMP, facilitate a letter of endorsement from Brian P

Kelly, Secretary of the new California State Transportation Agency (CalSTA), and collaborate with Senator Jean Fuller to introduce/sponsor a resolution from the California Senate endorsing and supporting the CMP and Route 66.

On September 30 the CDD began distributing copies of the recently published BLM Route 66 Brochure to local, city and county.

On Friday, October 9, the CMP Team met with State Senator Jean Fuller. It is anticipated that the Senator will provide a letter of support for the CMP as well as sponsor a resolution for a Route 66-related event such as the Economic Tourism Development Symposium being planned by the California Historic Route 66 Association and the BLM next spring in Barstow in collaboration with the Barstow Chamber of Commerce.

### **Congressionally Designated Johnson Valley Off Highway Vehicle (OHV) Recreation Area**

**BLM Action:** Johnson Valley OHV Recreation Area

**Agency:** BLM, Barstow Field Office and California Desert District Office  
Department of Navy, Marine Corps Air Ground Combat Center (MCAGCC)

**Contact:** Katrina Symons, Field Manager, Barstow Field Office

**Status:** On November 21, 2015 there will be a Resource Management Group public meeting from 10:00 AM – 1:00 PM at the Johnson Valley Community Center, 50567-A Quailbush Rd, Johnson Valley, CA 92285, located 1-3/4 miles south of Hwy. 247 (Old Woman Springs Rd.) on Larrea Road, at the corner of Quailbush Road. The purpose of the meeting is to communicate the Marine Corps' plans to conduct a large-scale exercise in August 2016 that will include training in the congressionally established Shared Use Area. Information concerning temporary land closures and public safety will be discussed. All members of the public are welcome to attend.

BACKGROUND: On December 26, 2013 the National Defense Authorization Act of 2014 (NDAA) was signed into law, authorizing the Marine Corps to occupy the Johnson Valley Shared Use Area (SUA) for two 30-day periods annually during which time the area would be closed to the public.

In July 2015, the Marine Corps notified BLM of their plans to utilize the Johnson Valley Shared Use Area for military training from August 1-30, 2016, and of the associated temporary closure. BLM is working with the Marines to address issues associated with this military training/closure, and to keep the public informed.

The Marines have established a project website to obtain additional information:  
<http://www.29palms.marines.mil/Staff/G5CommunityPlansPAO/JohnsonValley.aspx>

The Marines have also developed a mobile app for Johnson Valley OHV Recreation Area to alert the user to the SUA temporary closures for military training and when the user approaches/crosses into an area permanently closed to public access. The mobile app can be obtained at the previously mentioned project website.

### **Special Recreation Permits**

**BLM Action:** October 1, 2015 to November 20, 2015

**Agency:** BLM, Barstow Field Office

**Contact:** Zachary Pratt, Supervisory Outdoor Recreation Planner, Barstow Field Office  
Katrina Symons, Field Manager, Barstow Field Office

**Status:** From October 1, 2015 to November 20, 2015, a total of 14 Special Recreation Permits (SRP) have been administered by the Barstow Field Office. Most of these SRPs entail motorized race events. There are currently 57 scheduled SRP events in Fiscal Year 2016, with some being multi-day events.

Additionally, 25 vending permits have been issued with most of the vending occurring within the Dumont Dunes OHV Area.

### **Film Permits (Commercial and Non-Commercial)**

**BLM Action:** October 1, 2015 to November 20, 2015

**Agency:** BLM, Barstow Field Office

**Contact:** Timothy Hough, Outdoor Recreation Planner, Barstow Field Office  
Cecilia Franklin, Volunteer Coordinator, Barstow Field Office

**Status:** From October 1, 2015 to November 20, 2015, a total of 18 film permits have been administered by the Barstow Field Office, including non-commercial filming projects to students enrolled in a university related to the filming industry that must complete a class assignment. The most popular shoot locations include El Mirage, Johnson Valley, and Dumont Dunes OHV Recreation Areas.

### **Volunteer Program**

**BLM Action:** Volunteer Program

**Contacts:** Cecilia Franklin, Volunteer Coordinator, Barstow Field Office  
Rose Beardshear, Interpretive Specialist, Barstow Field Office

**Status:** The BFO continues to have a successful volunteer program. In Fiscal Year 2015 volunteers donated nearly 24,000 hours. Ongoing volunteer efforts include the OHV Ambassador Program. This volunteer program provides a means for private citizens to work with the Barstow Field Office to promote responsible OHV recreation on public lands. These volunteers contribute their time, experience, and local knowledge of OHV areas by monitoring public lands in groups of two or more on motorcycles, ATVs, UTVs, or 4x4 vehicles; conducting special projects (e.g., fence repair, clean-ups), and distributing informational material at high use OHV sites. Through monitoring efforts volunteers provide a positive image of their recreation activity, and identify road, trail, and other resource issues. OHV Ambassadors receive training from professional training representatives and serve as a point of contact for other OHV users to obtain helpful and informative information about the trails they ride.

The Desert Discovery Center continues to use volunteers and partners to provide environmental education programs in an effort to increase student's knowledge and awareness about the Mojave Desert environment and associated challenges.

Additionally, there were numerous clean-up events held throughout the Barstow Field Office and hosted by partner organizations including the Friends of El Mirage, Friends of Dumont Dunes, Friends of Rasor, Friends of Giant Rock and Slash X.

### **Recreation Fee Sites**

**BLM Action:** Dumont Dunes OHV Area

**Contact:** Timothy Hough, Park Ranger, Barstow Field Office

**Status:** Over the Halloween holiday week, Dumont Dunes OHV Area visitation was nearly 11,000 which is a 16% increase from Fiscal Year 2015. There were 23 medical incidents with four patients transported either by ground or air, and 16 patients that signed against medical advice. No injuries were life-threatening. Law Enforcement Rangers made 543 contacts, issued 107 verbal and written warnings, issued 38 citations, and there was one arrest for DUI.

The Dumont Dunes Subgroup, under the authority of the California Desert District Desert Advisory Council, continues to provide input to the BLM regarding issues pertinent to the Dumont Dunes OHV Area. The next meeting is scheduled for December 1, 2015 at the Barstow Field Office at 10:00 AM.

**BLM Action:** El Mirage Cooperative Management Area

**Contact:** Rose Beardshear, Interpretive Specialist, Barstow Field Office

**Status:** In Fiscal Year 2015 El Mirage Cooperative Management Area had nearly 55,000 visitors which is a 23% decrease from Fiscal Year 2014. The reduced visitation is in part due to several special recreation permit events being cancelled due to rain and the associated closure of the El Mirage Lakebed.

The Friends of El Mirage were awarded an OHMVR grant for operations and maintenance in the El Mirage Cooperative Management Area. The BLM Barstow Field Office continues to meet monthly with the Friends of El Mirage and relies heavily on this partnership to leverage resources for the successful management of this popular OHV area.

### **Old Spanish National Historic Trail Plan**

**BLM Action:** The BLM Barstow Field Office is working with the California Chapter of the Old Spanish Trail Association to make the Desert Discovery Center a place where the public can learn about the Old Spanish National Historic Trail (OSNHT) while offering a broad range of recreational experiences that are related to the trail route and trail resources. The center will continue to be called the Desert Discovery Center and Park with a primary focus of discovering the OSNHT and its natural and cultural resources and recreation opportunities along the trail. The Desert Discovery Center would serve in bringing the Old Spanish National Historic Trail to life so that it becomes a valuable education and recreation asset for residents and visitors alike.

**Agency:** BLM, Barstow Field Office, California Desert District Office, California State Office  
Old Spanish Trail Association, California Chapter  
Desert Discovery Center Partners

**Contact:** Rose Beardshear, Interpretive Specialist, Barstow Field Office

**Status:** California's 3rd Annual Old Spanish Trail Day Celebration kicked off at the BLM's Desert Discovery Center (DDC) on October 3, 2015 with an action-packed day of hands-on history that engaged the entire community.

Co-sponsored by the DDC partnership and Old Spanish Trail Association, the event drew more than 1,200 people who enjoyed a full day of mule packing, flint knapping, pioneer cooking, folklorico dancing, gem wrapping, and a variety of other activities. Pioneer presenters and living history characters took the crowds back in time to the 1800s where they shared stories of life along the Old Spanish Trail.

Last year California state legislation designated the first Saturday in October "Old Spanish Trail Day". Along with the festivities, the BLM Barstow Field Office used this venue to release its draft copy of the Old Spanish Trail Recreation and Development Strategy. The strategy seeks to bring the Old Spanish National Historic Trail to life in San Bernardino and Inyo Counties so that it becomes a valuable education and recreation asset for residents and visitors alike. The draft is a guiding document for future efforts to mark, improve, interpret, and utilize the trail.

One of the major proposals in the Recreation and Development Strategy is a plan to make the Desert Discovery Center a place where the public can learn about the Old Spanish Trail while offering a broad range of recreation experiences related to the trail route and trail resources. The DDC would be the central hub for education on the Old Spanish National Historic Trail, as well as subsequent trails and highways that are important to the history and settlement of the west.

### **West Mojave Plan, Route Rehabilitation, Monitoring and Signing**

**BLM Action:** BLM has reopened the public comment period on the Draft West Mojave Route Network Project/Supplemental Environmental Impact Statement for an additional 120 days, and continues to process public comments on the draft plan. Two additional Open Houses have been scheduled: Tuesday, December 15, in Victorville and Thursday, December 17, in Ridgecrest.

On September 30, 2015 a Programmatic Agreement (PA) for the identification and evaluation of historic properties during the implementation of the West Mojave Route Network was finalized. The PA was the result of a year of intensive meetings with the SHPO, ACHP, tribes and other participants. To date, the PA has been signed by 24 concurring parties in addition to the SHPO, ACHP, and BLM California State Director.

BLM has completed the second year of its nine-year incursion monitoring. Through Fiscal Year 2015, BLM completed field inspection and data recordation on a total of 231.58 miles of field sample routes and 106.69 miles of the aerial mapping sample routes. A Monitoring Program Results Report will be prepared after the completion of 3-years of incursion monitoring.

The BFO continues work with the Transition Habitat Conservancy (THC), Farm Workers Institute of Education and Leadership Development (FIELD), Friends of Juniper Flats and the Friends of El Mirage to implement signing of open routes, route closures, monitoring and restoration efforts in support of the West Mojave Plan.

**Agencies:** BLM  
Advisory Council on Historic Preservation (ACHP)  
State Historic Preservation Office (SHPO)  
Transition Habitat Conservancy  
Friends of El Mirage  
Farm Workers Institute of Education and Leadership Development  
Friends of Juniper Flats

**Contacts:** Edythe Seehafer, WEMO Project Manager, Barstow Field Office  
Craig Beck, WEMO Assistant Project Manager, Ridgecrest Field Office  
Carl Symons, Field Manager, Ridgecrest Field Office  
Ashley Blythe, Archaeologist, Ridgecrest Field Office  
Katrina Symons, Field Manager, Barstow Field Office

**Status:** The BLM is continuing to process public comments on the Draft West Mojave Route Network Project/Supplemental Environmental Impact Statement and is drafting its travel management plans for release next spring with the Final Plan Amendment. The end of the 120-day public comment period is 4:30 PM on January 25, 2016.

The BLM is now working with the State Historic Preservation Office and the Advisory Council on Historic Places on the Historic Properties Management Plan as agreed upon in the signed Programmatic Agreement for compliance with Section 106 of the National Historic Preservation Act.

The third year of incursion monitoring is ongoing.

Signing and restoration work is ongoing in the El Mirage, Fremont Peak, Black Mountain, Calico Mountain and Juniper Flats Subregions.

### **Friends of Juniper Flats Working Group**

**BLM Action:** October 1, 2015 to November 20, 2015

**Agency:** BLM, Barstow Field Office  
Friends of Juniper Flats  
Alliance for Desert Preservation  
District 37  
Transition Habitat Conservancy  
Mojave Communities Conservation Collaborative

**Contact:** Zachary Pratt, Recreation Branch Chief, Barstow Field Office  
Rose Beardshear, Interpretive Specialist, Barstow Field Office  
Miguel Mejia, Biological Technician, Barstow Field Office  
James Shearer, Archeologist, Barstow Field Office  
Cecilia Franklin, Volunteer Coordinator, Barstow Field Office

**Status:** The Barstow Field Office and the Friends of Juniper Flats Working Group have met twice on the second Tuesday of the month in Juniper Flats. On October 13 the group went to locations where on October 17 four temporary kiosks were installed. Information posted on the kiosks was developed by the Education Sub-group and one volunteer helped in placing the kiosks. On November 10 the group met at a couple of the kiosk locations where group members were given a volunteer time log and a monitoring form. Field training on how to complete the forms was given at several locations along the boundary routes along with a discussion of repairing fencing and placing Open Route markers within the 5,000 acre restoration polygon.

On November 6, the Barstow Field Manager met with the Juniper Flats working group to discuss the OHMVR restoration grant and the strategy forward. One of the first steps is to sign all of the designated routes within 5,000 acre polygon. Doing so will mean

that many of the interior routes will have to have the fiberglass route signs lugged along the route for long distances in most cases. A lot of volunteer help will be needed to install the route signs. Also presented was the grant funding and amounts accomplished in each of the item areas. An update of expenditures will be provided at each monthly meeting.

Annie Lancaster of Desert Natives Nursery was contacted by the Education and Restoration sub-group to discuss how live plants might be used as part of the restoration of off-route travel/incursions.

### **Law Enforcement**

**BLM Action:** Addition of K9 Officer

**Agency:** BLM, Barstow Field Office

**Contact:** Patrick Chassie, Chief Ranger, Barstow Field Office

**Status:** The Barstow Law Enforcement Program has acquired a K9 asset. “Goose” and Ranger MacLean will patrol the Public Lands under the management of the Barstow Field Office. This team will increase public safety by detecting dangerous drugs, and “Goose” will provide backup to Ranger MacLean increasing employee safety in remote areas.