

HIGHLIGHTS BARSTOW FIELD OFFICE

**California Desert District
Advisory Council Meeting
May 2016 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 Road Department

Contact: Chris Otahal, Wildlife Biologist, Barstow Field Office

Status: Aggressive habitat restoration efforts are being undertaken at Marsh 1 at the recommendation of the Amargosa Vole Team based on previous research done at the site. We have received \$8,000 from the State Office to move forward on this habitat enhancement project which is referred to as the “Big Fix”. Work on this project was initiated in March 2016. In April, 20 volunteers spent a week at Borehole removing dead wrack from the marsh. They removed 65 cubic yards (13 dump truck loads) of material. Water levels are now being manipulated to provide optimal growing conditions for the recovering marsh.

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 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. Additionally, Purdue completed a genetic map of the entire genome for one vole in April which will allow researchers to look for unique genes which may be present in the vole. 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. Trapping (involving over 600 live traps) was initiated in December 2015 in support of this study.

Recent research coming out of UC Davis indicates that the bulrush which serves as the vole's sole food source is extremely low in nutritional value. In fact, the researcher states that "no animal he is aware of can survive with such a meager diet and indeed, nutritional analysis of bulrush tissues reveals it has less to offer as a sole source diet than bamboo, the famously minimalist diet of the panda." Based on these findings, researchers are using next generation sequencing to describe the entire community of gut bacteria to figure out how voles can accomplish this feat. This research could have significant implications as to how to prepare voles for release into the wild after being reared in captivity.

BFO received \$25,000 from the FY2016 National Conservation Lands Research Support Program to allow UC Davis to investigate inter-marsh movements of Amargosa Vole populations to better manage this endangered species.

BFO worked with USGS and other Amargosa Vole Team members to compile presentations for the last Western Section of the Wildlife Society meeting in February 2016. Fourteen Amargosa Vole presentations were made. The Symposium was well received with over 520 attendees.

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
- 6) Hydrology Studies

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.

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 6 acres as part of their trail grant. This will bring our total treatment for this year to 84 acres.

Additionally, BFO is working with partners at Point Blue and the Nature Conservancy to secure a Section 6 Grant to conduct active restoration (tree planting) on private lands adjacent to the Amargosa ACEC/WSR to help jumpstart habitat improvements following tamarisk treatment. To date, most of the recovery of habitat following tamarisk treatment has been through passive restoration – letting natural processes regrow natives after treatment – with some success. Actively planting after tamarisk treatment will expedite habitat improvement efforts.

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. A draft report was received by BFO documenting the pre-treatment fish conditions in 2014 and this will serve as a baseline for comparing post-treatment fish conditions. Early results of this effort were published in a Fisheries and Aquatics Program Blog post entitled: *Enhancing Habitat for Rare Endemic Fish on the Amargosa River in California*.

Amargosa Conservancy (Sperry Wash)

BLM Action: Working with partner in the Sperry Wash area to refine restoration project

Agency: BLM, Barstow Field Office
Amargosa Conservancy

Contact: Jeff Childers, Resources Branch Chief, Barstow Field Office
Zachary Pratt, Recreation Branch Chief, Barstow Field Office

Chris Otahal, Wildlife Biologist, Barstow Field Office

Status: BFO and Amargosa Conservancy staff have recently worked together to identify locations for route and wilderness signage along Sperry Wash, as well as fence maintenance and barrier fence installation to prevent motorized incursions into a section of the Amargosa Wild and Scenic River. BFO continues to work with the conservancy to refine the final scope of work and is in the process of developing the NEPA documents required to implement the project. The project is proposed to be implemented in 2016.

Afton Canyon Wildlife Habitat Enhancement Efforts

BLM Action: The BFO is beginning a focused wildlife habitat enhancement program for the Afton Canyon Area of Environmental Concern (ACEC) largely modeled on the successful program associated with the Amargosa River Wild and Scenic River. The section of the Mojave River which flows through Afton Canyon ACEC is currently considered “Eligible” under the National Wild and Scenic River and is managed to maintain the Scenic, Recreational, Geologic, Fish and Wildlife, Historic, and Cultural Outstanding and Remarkable Values on which this determination was based. The canyon has also been designated a Watchable Wildlife Area due to its high biodiversity such as the 180 bird species that utilize the area. Afton Canyon is also part of the newly designated Mojave Trail National Monument and data being collected will help in the development of the management plan for this monument.

Agency: BLM, Barstow Field Office
Point Blue
United States Geological Survey (USGS)

Contact: Chris Otahal, Wildlife Biologist, Barstow Field Office

Status: The ACEC has been the focus of several wildlife habitat enhancement efforts over the last several years such as tamarisk removal, natural habitat planting, and barrier fencing. The following activities are being planned and or implemented in FY 2016:

1. Bird Monitoring
2. Tamarisk Beetle Monitoring
3. Tamarisk Treatment
4. Fish Surveys
5. Pond Turtle Surveys

To this end, BFO has committed \$17,373 to conduct bird spot mapping surveys this year to collect baseline data on breeding birds in Afton Canyon. Also, as part of these efforts, presence /absence surveys will be conducted for the tamarisk beetle to determine if they are present on site. The beetle has been found upstream of the Afton site, so it will be interesting to see if the beetle moves onto the site on its own. Also, BFO is pursuing funding options for tamarisk treatment after baseline bird data are collected.

BFO is working with the USGS to conduct Western Pond Turtle Surveys in Afton Canyon. In 1999, researchers estimated that 15-23 Western Pond Turtles inhabited Afton Canyon. Subsequent flooding seems to have eliminated this population though Western Pond Turtles have not been observed in the canyon since the 1999 surveys following a series of flooding events with the exception of a possible sighting in 2015. Based on approximately 125 hours of trapping efforts in April 2016, the site still appears unoccupied. Additional follow-up surveys are proposed for late-May 2016.

BFO also has FY16 funding to survey the canyon for fish species utilizing the site to assess current fish populations.

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: The Desert Tortoise Management Oversight Group (MOG) met on December 8, 2015 to discuss in detail the recommendations coming out of the RIT process. Review and discussion of RIT Priority Recovery Actions for FY 2016 was one topic at the meeting. One of the Priority Recovery Actions proposed by BFO was considered in the top five for the Mojave Desert Region. This project would provide funding to conduct route signing and some restoration in and around Lane Mountain. This activity would benefit both the desert tortoise and Lane Mountain Milkvetch. BFO is currently seeking funding to implement this project through the MOG and other funding sources such as End of Year funding provided by USFWS. The MOG will be meeting on June 21 to discuss RIT projects and funding opportunities.

The next in-person RIT meeting is scheduled to take place April 26 in Palm Springs. The meeting Goals and Objectives are as follows:

- Review RIT process and interconnection with the Management Oversight Group
- Identify, refine, and develop recovery project concepts
- Learn how to upload projects into the Recovery Action Tracking Tool
- Nominate representatives to fill gaps in RIT rosters

Quail Forever Guzzler Project

BLM Action: High Desert Quail Forever has identified seven wildlife guzzlers in and around the El Mirage OHV Area which have fallen into disrepair over the years and are no longer functional. The organization has approached BFO to coordinate the rehabilitation of these facilities which will support hutable bird species as well as other wildlife.

Agency: BLM, Barstow Field Office
High Desert Quail Forever

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

Status: In September 2015, BFO met with High Desert Quail Forever to discuss proposed rehabilitation of several locations throughout the BFO area. In 2016, the organization requested to conduct rehabilitation of existing guzzlers in and around the El Mirage OHV Area. BFO is currently working with Quail Forever to implement actions in 2017.

Mojave Ground Squirrel Study

BLM Action: Researchers working on Mojave Ground Squirrel have recently developed a model which depicts potential changes in the range of this species under conditions projected under climate change scenarios. Trapping surveys have been proposed in several locations within the BFO area which are designed to help validate these models.

Agency: BLM, Barstow Field Office, Desert District Office and California State Office

Contact: Chis Otahal, Wildlife Biologist, Barstow Field Office

Status: Funding for the first year of surveys of this multi-year endeavor has been provided by the California State Office to the Desert District Office. BFO is helping coordinate the on the ground implementation of the survey effort.

Coolgardie Mesa and West Paradise Proposed Withdrawal

BLM Action: The BLM filed an application for withdrawal of 10,094.03 acres of public lands for habitat conservation of the Lane Mountain Milkvetch, a federally listed endangered species located within San Bernardino County, California.

Agencies: BLM, Barstow Field Office
US Fish and Wildlife Service (USFWS), Ventura Office

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

Status: In August 2014, a notice was published in the Federal Register, temporarily segregating 10,094.03 acres of public lands from location and entry under the Mining Law, subject to valid existing rights for a two-year period.

The Lane Mountain Milkvetch is a federally listed endangered species found within two conservation areas known as Coolgardie Mesa and West Paradise. This species has a limited geographical range. The USFWS listed this species in October 1998 under the Endangered Species Act. The primary threat contributing to listing of the Lane Mountain Milkvetch is alteration and destruction of habitat.

In 2005, the Coolgardie Mesa and West Paradise areas were designated as Areas of Critical Concern (ACEC) by the California Desert Management Plan amendment referred to as the West Mojave Plan. These ACECs contained about half of the known locations of the individual Lane Mountain Milkvetch plants and 45 % of its habitat.

In October 2014, a public meeting and a 45-day comment period were provided. BLM received a moderate amount of comments received from the public supporting the withdrawal.

The Coolgardie area is a popular recreational mining location. BLM has established casual use mining guidelines to monitor and to the extent possible, prevent unnecessary or undue degradation to public lands. Recreational mining is permitted under 43 CFR 3809.5 as defined under “casual use”. Recreational mining cannot involve the use of mechanized earth moving equipment or explosives. This activity may only cause negligible disturbance to be considered casual use. No impact to this activity is expected from approval of the withdrawal.

A detailed analysis by BLM is ongoing which includes a mineral potential report and an environmental assessment (EA). A 30-day public comment will begin upon posting of the environmental assessment projected for May 2016.

The withdrawal of the two Lane Mountain Milkvetch conservation areas from future mineral entry is expected to be forwarded to the Secretary of Interior for decision by August 2016.

Silurian Valley Wind Farm Proposal (Update)

BLM Action: Pacific Wind Development, LLC, a subsidiary of Iberdrola Renewables, Inc., filed an application for construction and operation of a 200 megawatt wind farm on public lands located north of Baker, California. Proposal included 67-133 wind turbines including a new project substation with an overhead 287-kV transmission line involving 15,849 acres of public lands. Key issues were visual landscape, impacts to the Old Spanish historic trail and historic Tidewater and Tonopah railroad, golden eagles and the Department of Defense flight corridor (HRIZ).

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

Contacts: Katrina Symons, Field Manager, Barstow Field Office
Jeff Childers, Assistant Field Manager, Barstow Field Office
Joan Patrovsky, Realty Specialist, Barstow Field Office

Status: Application has been withdrawn by proponent. Removal and reclamation of the five data collecting meteorological towers have been completed.

Lucerne Valley Wind Testing

BLM Action: Pacific Wind Development, LLC, a subsidiary of Iberdrola Renewables, Inc., filed an application for assignment and amendment of a Type II wind data collection grant on public lands located north of the Town of Apple Valley, California. The grant allows up to three meteorological towers and reservation of a project area for a future potential wind farm.

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

Contacts: Katrina Symons, Field Manager, Barstow Field Office
Joan Patrovsky, Realty Specialist, Barstow Field Office

Status: The right-of-way was assigned from Mainstream Renewables to Pacific Wind Development. The grant was also amended to install two additional meteorological towers within the reserved project study area of 21, 971.31 acres.

Potential key issues if a Type III development application is filed: visual landscape, impacts to the Stoddard Valley Off-Highway Vehicle Area, golden eagles, and the Department of Defense flight corridor (HRIZ) and radar system.

DesertXpress High Speed Rail

BLM Action: In December 2011, BLM issued a right-of-way grant to DesertXpress, LLC to construct, operate and maintain a high speed passenger rail across public lands from Victorville, CA to Las Vegas, NV. The passenger rail would be constructed along or near Interstate 15. The Federal Railroad Agency (FRA) is the federal lead agency.

Contacts: Katrina Symons, Field Manager, Barstow Field Office
Joan Patrovsky, Realty Specialist, Barstow Field Office

Status: The holder has been progressing to obtain applicable governmental permits, contract and initiate field surveys and financial implementation plans toward a five year phased development; Phase 1 – complete design and obtain pre-construction permits by fall

2017 or early 2018. Phase 2 – construction may begin potentially by fall 2018 and followed by Phase 3 – testing and commissioning of the passenger rail.

The DesertXpress rail is proposed to interconnect with the High Desert Transportation Expansion Corridor (Palmdale to Apple Valley). The High Desert Corridor DEIS/EIR is projected to be released in fall 2016. The California Department of Transportation is proposing to construct a new freeway/expressway connecting the City of Palmdale in Los Angeles County with the town of Apple Valley in San Bernardino County. The proposed freeway/expressway is approximately 63 miles long. A rail connection is proposed in the plans. Information can be found <http://www.dot.ca.gov/dist07/HDC>

CalNev Pipeline Re-alignment Project

BLM Action: CalNev Pipe Line, LLC (CalNev), filed an application to amend their right-of-way (Kinder Morgan Energy Partners, LP) proposing to construct a 16-inch-diameter pipeline to expand the capacity of the CalNev Pipeline System. The CalNev Pipeline Expansion Project will involve the construction, operation, and maintenance of a new 16-inch-diameter pipeline and ancillary facilities from an existing facility in Colton, California to an existing facility in Las Vegas, Nevada. The proposed pipeline would parallel two existing system pipelines for most of the route

Contacts: Katrina Symons, Field Manager, Barstow Field Office
Joan Patrovsky, Realty Specialist/Project Manager, Barstow Field Office
Mark Massar, District Biologist, California Desert District

Status: A Final Biological Opinion from the United States Fish and Wildlife Service was issued in March 2016. Release of the FEIS/FEIR for the project is pending.

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 (ROD) was issued March 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 revised the initial proposed action of grading, tensioning of the power lines, or raising the towers to meet NERC and FERC height clearance requirements and avoid sensitive resource impacts. The revised proposed action now includes blading 69 sites of the original 70 sites with acceptable mitigation. The new proposed work consists of reducing surface area grading and limiting all human traffic along a trespassed disturbance previously thought a travel road. LADWP is proposing to conduct the work in 2016. A visit to the site removed with clearance issues will be conducted in April to determine the protective measures to limit access to the site removed.

Agency: BLM, Barstow Field Office

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

Status: Administrative biological report and administrative cultural reports are under review. A conflict was identified with cultural resources and is being addressed by BLM and LADWP. Anticipate the publication of an environmental assessment in FY 2016.

Mining - Locatable Minerals

BLM Action: Iron Age Plan of Operations

Contact: Jamie Livingood, Geologist, Barstow Field Office

Status: BLM staff is reviewing an Environmental Assessment for a Plan of Operations (Plan) for reprocessing iron ore material first mined in 1904-1908 at the Iron Age Mine and is currently in consultation with the USFWS. The mine produced ~1300-1400 tons of iron ore (hematite) in 1951 and as a result, left large waste rock piles that the current proponent is proposing to re-work. The property has been idle since early 1952. Concentrating/milling the ore will be conducted on approximately 3 acres of the patented Iron Age 2 mining claim with ore being brought in from the Iron Age 3 mining claims as well as BLM administered Easy Pickens 1 and Easy Pickens 2 mining claims (CAMC 260830 and 260831 respectively). Approximately 2.3 million tons per year; 920,000 tons of product and 1.4 million tons of waste rock/low grade ore that doesn't meet spec will be backfilled into the current quarry on the patented claims using conveyors and or trucks. A water well will be drilled on-site for all dust emission controls and a dust palliative may be applied on the haul road to reduce daily water demand. It's estimated that 9 million gallons of water will be pumped annually for up to 15 years. No wastewater will be generated as a result of excavation or plant operations. Thirty to sixty, 50 ton haul trucks per day will haul ore to two mill sites just south of Highway 62 where the ore will be stockpiled for highway legal trucks to haul to market.

BLM Action: Appeal of Notice Action

Contact: Jamie Livingood, Geologist, Barstow Field Office

Status: The BLM received a Notice level proposal for the California Blue Gem mine. After finalizing the review of the Action, the BLM determined that the site was located within the Superior Cronese Desert Wildlife Management Area and would require a Plan of Operations (POO). The applicant was notified in January 2016. The applicant has appealed BLM's decision to require a POO to the Interior Board of Land Appeals.

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: In July 2015, following more than 18 months of extensive collaboration and coordination with local, city, county, state and federal stakeholders, elected representatives and non-government officials, the BLM California Desert District and California Historic Route 66 Association (CHR66A) completed a CMP for the section of Historic Route 66 between Barstow and Needles. Between September and December 2015, the cities of Needles and Barstow and the San Bernardino County Board of Supervisors unanimously passed resolutions endorsing the CMP.

In March 2016, the Barstow and Needles City Councils unanimously passed motions to sign Memorandums of Understanding (MOU) with the BLM to serve as Route 66 Gateways. The City of Needles also will serve as a Mojave Trails National Monument Gateway. The BLM will collaborate with the cities to develop print and social media educational and interpretive outreach programs to promote the Mojave Trails National Monument and Route 66.

The CMP includes a marketing strategy to promote sustainable heritage tourism, and utilize adjacent BLM National Conservation Lands and other BLM-managed public lands to enhance economic development opportunities. As part of the strategy, the BLM and CHR66A will host an Economic Development Symposium in Barstow on May 18, 2016. Guest speakers and presentations will highlight community success stories on how Route 66 revitalization projects (e.g., restoration and preservation of historical buildings, improved services and signage) resulted in substantial tourism economic benefits to their cities and communities.

In April 2016 the BLM California Desert District submitted letters to the United States Department of Transportation (DOT) in support of two applications submitted by San Bernardino County for DOT grants to conduct road repairs and bridge reconstruction/stabilization throughout the 130-mile segment of historic Route 66 between Barstow and Needles. The grants include a \$32 million TIGER grant (Transportation Investment Generating Economic Recovery), and a \$50 million FASTLANE grant (Fostering Advancements in Shipping and Transportation for the Long-term Achievement of National Efficiencies).

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 April 2, 2016 a Resource Management Group (RMG) public meeting was held at the Lucerne Valley Community Center with approximately 30 people in attendance. The purpose of the meeting was to communicate the Marine Corps' plans to conduct a large-scale exercise in August 2016 that will include training in the Shared Use Area. Information concerning temporary land closures and public safety were also discussed.

The Marine Corps will host a public meeting at the Johnson Valley Community Center on June 25, 2016 from 10 am to Noon (NOTE: This is not a RMG meeting). This meeting is also intended to communicate the Marine Corps' plans to conduct a large-scale exercise in August 2016. Information concerning temporary land closures in the Johnson Valley Shared Use Area and public safety information will be discussed with

attendees. All members of the public are welcome to attend. For additional information, contact the Marine Corps Air Ground Combat Center Public Affairs Office at 760-830-6213 or SMBPLMSWEBPAO@usmc.mil.

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 SUA for military training from August 1-30, 2016, and of the associated temporary closure.

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. This website also has a “How To” guide and video for the mobile app.

Additionally, the Marines have posted a video on training at the Combat Center: <http://www.29palms.marines.mil/UnitHome.aspx>. This video is useful for understanding the military training that occurs at MCAGCC.

Amargosa Conservancy Nopah Wilderness Project

BLM Action: The Nopah Wilderness in Chicago Valley has several motorized incursions. The Amargosa Conservancy is working with BFO to rehabilitate and obliterate these routes using vertical mulching.

Agency: BLM, Barstow Field Office
Amargosa Conservancy

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

Status: In January 2016, BFO and Amargosa Conservancy staff, identified locations for placing/replacing route and wilderness signage on the wilderness boundary, as well as identifying incursions to eliminate through vertical mulching. The first incursion was treated in late January by the Amargosa Conservancy using a SCA crew. A second incursion was restored in March 2016 by the Amargosa Conservancy in conjunction with the Great Old Broads for Wilderness.

Great Old Broads for Wilderness, Mojave Broadwalk

BLM Action: Guiding hikes and tours around Shoshone, Tecopa, Dumont Dunes, and Salt Creek on public lands. Also provided information and examples of management challenges in accomplishing BLM's multiple-use mission.

Agency: BLM, Barstow Field Office and Needles Field Office
Amargosa Conservancy

Contact: Zachary Pratt, Recreation Branch Chief, Barstow Field Office

Status: From March 18-20, 2016 ad hoc presentations and conversations along the trail and in camp with the 40 Old Broad's took place focusing on a variety of topics from motorized off-highway areas to climate change.

Saturday was spent exploring and experiencing the Dumont Dunes and Little Dumont Dunes OHV Area. Also spent time at Salt Creek on the 1.5 mile interpretive trail with 15 points of interest kiosks which discussed a variety of topics (e.g., historic ruins, black smith shop, stamp mill, bats, and mining).

On Sunday the Broadwalk started from the Amargosa River Trailhead at China Ranch and Willow Creek, and followed the historic T & T railroad grade through the Amargosa Canyon and retracing portions of the Old Spanish Trail.

Special Recreation Permits

BLM Action: October 1, 2015 to April 29, 2016

Agency: BLM, Barstow Field Office

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

Status: From October 1, 2015 to April 29, 2016, a total of 45 Special Recreation Permits (SRP) have been administered by the Barstow Field Office. Most of these SRPs entail motorized race events. There are currently 70 scheduled SRP events in Fiscal Year 2016, with some being multi-day events.

Additionally, 110 vending permits have been issued with most of the vending occurring within the Dumont Dunes OHV Area and Johnson Valley OHV Recreation Area.

Film Permits (Commercial and Non-Commercial)

BLM Action: October 1, 2015 to April 29, 2016

Agency: BLM, Barstow Field Office

Contact: Cecilia Franklin, Volunteer Coordinator, Barstow Field Office

Status: From October 1, 2015 to April 29, 2016, a total of 43 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: A total of 160 volunteers joined in the 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 clean-up at Dumont Dunes on March 12, 2016. Ed Waldheim, member of the Dumont Dunes Subgroup of the California Desert Advisory Council, brought side dishes and donated the meat and buns, as well as cooked a fantastic lunch for all the volunteers who participated in the clean-up. OHV Ambassadors were on hand to assist with the Dumont Dunes cleanup as well as make contact with the visiting public.

Recreation Fee Sites

BLM Action: Dumont Dunes OHV Area

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

Status: 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 August 30, 2016 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: So far in Fiscal Year 2016 El Mirage Cooperative Management Area has had 38,400 visitors which is a 49% increase from our FY15 visitation. The increased visitation is due to the Bonneville event having been cancelled due to rain for the last two years. More visitors are attending and participating in the Southern California Timing Association events.

The Friends of El Mirage submitted a 2015/2016 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.

The exhibit plan for the Visitor Center is 100% complete. Plans are underway for the bid process to secure a vendor to develop a schematic design for the Visitor Center exhibits, including scripts and text elements, exhibit drawings, artifact lists, photograph and image lists.

The Friends of El Mirage will be hosting an annual Spring Clean-up on Saturday, May 7, 2016 where they will focus on cleaning the lakebed and improving the ATV technical course with new straw bales.

Desert Discovery Center

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 (DDC) 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 also interpret Route 66 and the newly designated Mojave Trails National Monument.

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: Main Street Murals, the BLM lead non-profit for the DDC, received a \$40,000 ECO grant from 3M to upgrade the nature trail that surrounds the DDC to an Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) compliant interpretive trail that will include outdoor teaching stations along with new curriculum development and teaching trunks. A volunteer day, held in conjunction with Earth Day, focused on rock lining the new ADA nature trail to complete the construction phase. Interpretive signs are currently being developed.

The DDC hosted an Earth Day celebration on Saturday, April 23, 2016 from 10:00 am - 3:00 pm. The event promoted environmental awareness in a fun and festive atmosphere with educational booths focused on the Mojave Desert, water conservation, composting, xeriscaping, and upcycling. Activities included an “earth cycle” youth poetry slam and an “earth cycle” dance performance by Studio M. Live music was performed throughout the day. The event was open to the public, and more than 200 children completed Passports.

Plans for California's 4th Annual Old Spanish Trail Day Celebration are underway at the BLM's Desert Discovery Center (DDC) to be held on October 1, 2016 with an action-packed day of hands-on history that engaged the entire community.

The Old Spanish Trail Recreation and Development Strategy is in final draft stage. Public comments will be compiled through the month of April. 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.

Plans for the DDC renovation will also include interpreting the newly designated Mojave Trails National Monument.

West Mojave Plan, Route Rehabilitation, Monitoring and Signing

BLM Action: West Mojave Planning and Implementation

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

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

Katrina Symons, Field Manager, Barstow Field Office

Status:

On April 29, 2016, BLM and the Plaintiffs jointly filed a status report and motion concerning the schedule to complete the West Mojave Route Network Project. The status report advised the Court that BLM would not meet the current deadlines for publishing a Final Supplemental Environmental Impact Statement/proposed Travel Management Plans (TMP) and Record of Decision for the WEMO Plan Amendment and TMPs. The status report also advised the Court that the Parties had initiated discussions on a revised planning schedule and requested an additional 45 days to meet and confer. The Parties also agreed that a motion on a revised planning schedule would be filed with the Court within 60 days.

The BLM is currently in the process of contracting to complete a baseline of disturbance within the West Mojave planning area to consider in its analysis for the West Mojave Route Network Project (WMRNP)/Supplemental Environmental Impact Statement (SEIS). This disturbance baseline is being considered along with other proposals in the Desert Renewable Energy Conservation Plan (DRECP), the new National Monument Proclamations, and public comments in the development and analysis of the proposed route designations, as well as how the network will support BLM's landscape level goals.

Since its initial meeting in January 2016, the BLM has had a working meeting with SHPO, ACHP and other interested parties to continue the development of the Historic Properties Management Plan (HPMP). The next meeting for the HPMP is scheduled for May 27, 2016, and a preliminary draft HPMP is anticipated this summer.

BLM is now in its third year of its nine-year incursion monitoring. A Monitoring Program Results Report will be issued this summer.

The BFO continues work with partners and volunteer groups (e.g., Transition Habitat Conservancy, Juniper Flats Working Group, Friends of El Mirage) to implement signing of open routes, route closures, monitoring and restoration efforts in support of the West Mojave Plan.

Juniper Flats Working Group

BLM Action: February 2016 to April 29, 2016

Agency:

BLM, Barstow Field Office
Friends of Juniper Flats
United States Forest Service (USFS)
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
Alyssa Canoff, Monitoring Intern, Barstow Field Office
Oliver Buck, Park Ranger, Barstow Field Office

Status: Maintenance and restoration work is ongoing and is being performed by BLM staff and members of the Volunteer sub-group of the Juniper Flats Working Group. Volunteer work days are scheduled in advance, typically occurring on a Thursday and Saturday. Work days are currently scheduled through May 2016. BLM staff recently provided training to the Juniper Flats Working Group on use of data gathering tablets. Three tablets have been issued to group members that are volunteering on a regular basis. The entire boundary fence of the 5,000 acre restoration project area has been repaired and is intact. Additionally, the BLM Fire Staff from Apple Valley have been helping install route signs. Information regarding the ongoing maintenance and restoration work in Juniper Flats continues to be updated on six kiosks to keep the public informed.