

# HIGHLIGHTS NEEDLES FIELD OFFICE

## California Desert District Advisory Council Meeting

October 15, 2016

### Mojave Trails National Monument (MTNM)

**BLM Action:** On February 12, 2016 the President designated the Mojave Trails National Monument comprised of 1.6 million acres of land located primarily in San Bernardino County, the majority of which is managed by the Needles Field Office, but also overlaps into the Barstow Field Office. Additionally there is a small area encompassing Camp Granite Mountain within Riverside County managed by the Palm Springs Field Office.

**Agencies:** BLM, Needles Field Office is the primary point of contact.

**Contact:** Mike Ahrens, Field Manager

**Status:** The Needles Field Office has selected a Monument Manager for the MTNM. The Manager, Kyle Sullivan is currently the Public Affairs Officer for the Front Range District Office in Colorado. Kyle brings a wealth of BLM experience to the California Desert and the MTNM. In an effort to make the MTNM Manager accessible to the majority of the public and our partner groups, Kyle will be located in our Moreno Valley District Office. While Kyle is already working with us, he will not officially report until mid-November.

The MTNM team is working to develop a “next steps” document that will outline the next steps in the MTNM planning process which will take place over the next six months. The document would then be updated periodically so that we would always be looking six months or better ahead. The document is meant to help guide the MTNM Planning Team.

The Mojave Desert Land Trust in Partnership with the Native American Lands Conservancy and COFEM held a moonlight event at the Cadiz Dunes. The event was well attended and offered the three diverse groups an opportunity to enjoy a common value, the Mojave Trails National Monument. The Amargosa Conservancy in partnership with the Latino Access Foundation held an event in Afton Canyon. These are each new activities specifically spurred by the designation of the MTNM, and we understand that each group anticipates a series of these events highlighting the MTNM.

The Blue Ribbon Coalition is proposing to hold an educational OHV event at Park Moabi which is located along the Colorado River and is managed by the Lake Havasu Field Office. To the credit of the BRC, they recognize that if they stage an event there for OHV enthusiasts, there will likely be a “spillover” of OHV use on to lands managed by the Needles Field Office potentially including the MTNM. The BRC prepared an operations plan that outlined the steps

they will take to ensure that the use remains casual and does not lead to unacceptable impacts. The NEFO will enter into a Letter of Agreement to confirm the actions outlined in the Operations Plan and their commitment to minimizing any impact.

### **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. 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.

**Agencies:** BLM, Needles Field Office

**Contact:** Mike Ahrens, Needles Field Office Manger

**Status:** NewCastle Gold has continued with previously authorized exploratory drilling all located within the mining area. NewCastle has indicated that they may request a third phase of exploratory drilling. The assess road to the mine washed out numerous time this year due to monsoonal storms. NewCastle has requested permission to replace culverts and other water control features in the road to prevent this in the future. BLM is considering the proposal and anticipates approval.

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### **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

### **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

### **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.

### **Partnerships**

Chicago Botanical Garden – The NFO will be partnering with the Chicago Botanic Garden’s Conservation and Land Management Internship to host 4 interns this spring. Two interns will be working on the Seeds of Success program. The program collects native plant seeds which are stored for use in research, restoration, or reclamation projects. Two other interns will be working on an OHMVR Grant-funded Invasive and Sensitive plant inventory project. This work will be the last season of a three year project that is focused on the inventory of invasive and sensitive plant species adjacent to NEMO and NECO roads and trails.

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.

Rancho Santa Ana Botanic Garden (RSABG) – the RSABG helps with sensitive plant inventory and SOS collections in remote portions of the NFO, and partners with NFO SOS interns to complete large seed collections.

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.

Native American Lands Conservancy (NALC) – The NFO is partnering with the NALC to support the management of the Old Woman Mtn. Wilderness and the adjacent NALC Old Woman Mtn Preserve. The NFO 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.

Research Institutions – The NFO supports research proposals through timely submissions of research permits and letters of support for funding proposals within the NFO. This year, the NFO has provided logistical support to researchers from the University of California – Davis, the San Diego Zoo, USGS, Point Blue Conservation Science, Cornell University, the California Academy of Sciences, and others, to facilitate relevant and timely research in the region.

Outreach – The NFO has provided multiple outreach events to the Chemehuevi Native American Tribe, including presenting at their winter festival, at an event for visiting students, and at an Earth Day event in 2016. They are also about to host a SCA wildcorps crew, who is doing ongoing restoration on a road in wilderness.