

## **HIGHLIGHTS BARSTOW FIELD OFFICE**

**California Desert District  
Advisory Council Meeting  
October 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 and to minimize potential adverse effects to marshes downstream of Marsh 1. Our partners have also been removing cattail populations which are attempting to invade the marsh. The restoration efforts have continued to receive positive press, including a nice video from Outdoor Nevada – a program shown on Nevada PBS (<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=6a0tV63xjSs>).

Our partners at the Amargosa Conservancy will receive additional funding to expand Amargosa Vole habitat re-creation on private lands in the Shoshone Area. Two habitat patches have been created on private lands adjacent to the Amargosa Wild and Scenic

River that is managed by BLM. This new funding would add a third patch in close proximity to these two marshes. BLM is coordinating with the Vole Team partners on this effort as part of the greater vole recovery efforts.

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 received \$64,000 from BLM Washington Office end of year funds for general support of habitat work and maintenance of the breeding colony in Davis.

Team members have three abstracts accepted for inclusion in the Natural Areas Association Conference to take place at Davis, California, in October relating to vole management in the context of climate change. A genetics paper titled: *Following the rivers: historical reconstruction of California voles *Microtus californicus* (Rodentia: Cricetidae) in the deserts of eastern California* was published in the Biological Journal of the Linnean Society in May. This article was based in part using genetic material collected as part of the Amargosa Vole research program and helps elucidate how various populations of California Vole have developed over time.

## **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 Conservation Science  
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.

On April 1, the BFO in cooperation with our partner Point Blue Conservation Science initiated the 11<sup>th</sup> year of intensive Spot Mapping (surveys for breeding bird territories) on the Amargosa River. These surveys are creating an extensive database documenting changes in the breeding bird populations in association with our on-going tamarisk treatments and cowbird management programs. BFO also received an additional \$10,000 in end of year funds from the Washington BLM Office to continue this work in the spring of 2017. These efforts have been featured as a “Partnership Spotlight” on BLM’s new Science Partnership Resources Website at <http://web.blm.gov/sciencepartnerships/>

BFO received \$12,000 in FY 2016 to continue tamarisk treatment (10 acres) on the Amargosa River. The BLM Fire/Fuels Management Program also treated 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 82 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 in September 2016 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*.

BFO is working with The Nature Conservancy to conduct a “Bio-Blitz” sometime this fall. This event involves coordinating a weekend of intensive surveys of plants and animals in the area with the intent of documenting as many resources as possible. This event will involve professionals from several institutions as well as “Citizen Scientists.”

### **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)  
California Department of Fish and Wildlife (CDFW)  
Living Desert Zoo Gardens  
Amargosa Conservancy

**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. Northern Tamarisk Beetle Monitoring
3. Tamarisk Treatment
4. Fish Surveys
5. Western Pond Turtle Surveys
6. Tui Chub and Western Pond Turtle Re-introduction

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.

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 had 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 appeared unoccupied. Additional follow-up surveys were conducted by USGS in May and no turtles were detected. However, a juvenile Western Pond Turtle was photographed in Afton Canyon on April 16, 2016 which is very encouraging.

BFO worked with the BLM State Office to obtain funding (\$30,000) to contract with USGS to conduct a feasibility study for the re-introduction of Tui Chub (a federally endangered species native to the Mojave River) and the Western Pond Turtle on a site in Afton Canyon.

Work continues with the Living Desert Zoo Gardens to explore the possibility of establishing a breeding facility for Western Pond Turtles to act as a source of turtles for re-introduction purposes.

BFO also received FY16 funding to survey the canyon for fish species utilizing the site to assess current fish populations. Approximately 2.0 km of surveys were conducted by contractors in September. A full report is forthcoming.

BFO received funding from the BLM State Office to conduct 10 acres of tamarisk treatment in Afton Canyon. Additionally, BLM Fire/Fuels Management Program has plans to burn 23.3 acres of tamarisk in the canyon this fall.

Based on surveys conducted by Point Blue in June 9 and field reports from researchers in

the area it appears that the Northern Tamarisk Beetle (a non-native bio-control which was released further upstream by a researcher in the area) may have established itself in Afton Canyon. We will be monitoring the situation to see how the population changes over time and their effect on tamarisk.

BFO staff is conducting repairs of post-and-cable fencing which has been damaged by vandalism and recent flooding events around the riparian areas within the canyon. These fences are designed to protect sensitive resources from unauthorized OHV use.

BFO is working with the Amargosa Conservancy to have biodiversity outreach days highlighting the Afton Canyon. One biodiversity day was held in September and two will be held in October.

### **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 restoration in and around Lane Mountain. This activity would benefit both the desert tortoise and Lane Mountain Milkvetch. The BFO received Fiscal Year 2016 funds (\$100,000) and recently contracted with Versar to implement this project in the Coolgardie Subregion. Additional end of year funding from the BLM Washington Office was received along with Fiscal Year 2017 funds (\$120,000) to support this project.

The last in-person RIT meeting took place April 26 in Palm Springs and was attended by BFO staff. The meeting Goals and Objectives were 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

The next RIT meeting is scheduled for October 25, 2016.

## Wildlife Water Projects

**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 huntable bird species as well as other wildlife. Additionally, the Society for the Conservation of Bighorn Sheep has identified one wildlife water in the Cady Mountains for replacement.

**Agency:** BLM, Barstow Field Office  
High Desert Quail Forever  
Society for the Conservation of Bighorn Sheep

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

**Status:** BFO is currently working with Quail Forever and the Society for the Conservation of Bighorn Sheep to implement actions in the last quarter of 2016 and 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:** BFO is helping coordinate the on the ground implementation of the survey effort. Surveys for 2016 have been completed and a report is forthcoming. The BLM State Office has secured funding for continued surveys in FY 2017, 2018 and 2019.

## Desert District Bendire's Thrasher Population Study/Migrant Bird Surveys

**BLM Action:** This is a joint project between the Needles, Ridgecrest, and Barstow Field Offices in partnership with Point Blue Conservation Science. The goal of this project is to obtain greater understanding of the breeding status of the Bendire's Thrasher and use of riparian areas by migrant birds throughout the California Desert District. This project will rely heavily on a Citizen Science component for obtaining field data through the online E-bird Program.

**Agency:** BLM Needles, Ridgecrest and Barstow Field Offices  
BLM District Office  
Point Blue Conservation Science  
Sonoran Joint Venture

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

**Status:** The California Desert District Office received \$30,000 in end of year funds from the BLM Washington Office to partially fund this project starting in 2017 and Point Blue Conservation Science received a Sonoran Joint Venture Grant (just under \$10,000) to round out the budget. BLM and its partners intend to initiate field work in the spring of 2017 by recruiting E-bird volunteers.

### **Desert Tortoise Translocation Plan**

**BLM Action:** The BFO is working with the Marine Corps Air Ground Combat Center, Twentynine Palms, California on implementing their Desert Tortoise Translocation Program in support of large-scale Marine Air Ground Task Force live-fire and maneuver training. The BFO, in coordination with the Needles Field Office, has been working with the Marine Corps Air Ground Combat Center (Combat Center) in the development of the Draft Supplemental Environmental Impact Statement (SEIS) which evaluates the potential impacts to sensitive resources from the translocation of desert tortoise from the Combat Center to surrounding areas, including lands administered by BLM. The Draft SEIS evaluates three alternative implementation strategies for the Desert Tortoise Translocation Program. Since many of the desert tortoises are proposed to be moved to lands administered by BLM, we are a cooperating agency on the Draft SEIS. Based on clearance surveys conducted in 2014 and 2015, an estimated 998 adult tortoises and 497 juveniles will need to be translocated.

**Agency:** BLM Barstow Field Office  
Department of Navy (DON), United States Marine Corps

**Contact:** Katrina Symons, Field Manager, Barstow Field Office  
Chris Otahal, Wildlife Biologist, Barstow Field Office

**Status:** The Draft SEIS has been completed and was made available for a 45-day public comment period on September 30, 2016. Three public meeting are scheduled as follows: (1) October 25, 2016 from 5:00 to 8:00 PM at Joshua Tree Community Center, 6171 Sunburst Street, Joshua Tree, CA 92252; (2) October 26, 2016 from 5:00 to 8:00 PM at Palm Springs Convention Center, 277 North Avenida Caballeros, Palm Springs, CA 92262; and (3) October 27, 2016 from 5:00 to 8:00 PM at Barstow Harvey House, 681 North 1<sup>st</sup> Avenue, Barstow, CA 92311.

BFO will continue to coordinate with the DON as the SEIS moves forward to a final document.

## **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.

The Coolgardie Mesa and West Paradise areas were designated as Areas of Critical Concern (ACEC) by the California Desert Conservation Area 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.

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 was completed by BLM which included a mineral potential report and an environmental assessment (EA) with a Finding of No Significant Impact.

The withdrawal of 10,094.30 acres of public lands within the Coolgardie Mesa and West Paradise ACECs from future mineral entry was forwarded to the Washington Office in July 2016 with an anticipated decision by November 2016.

### **Lucerne Valley Wind Testing**

**BLM Action:** Pacific Wind Development, LLC, a subsidiary of Iberdrola Renewables, Inc., has a Type II wind data collection grant on public lands located north of the Town of Apple Valley, California.

**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 issued to Pacific Wind Development in February 2016. The grant includes placement of up to four meteorological towers within the reserved project study area of 21,971.31 acres. Meteorological towers are in place and collection of wind speed data is on-going.

### **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 in 2020.

The DesertXpress rail is proposed to interconnect with the High Desert Corridor Project (Palmdale to Apple Valley). The High Desert Corridor Final EIS/EIR was released in June 2016. The California Department of Transportation District 7 is proposing to construct a new freeway/expressway/high-speed rail connecting the City of Palmdale in Los Angeles County with the town of Apple Valley in San Bernardino County. The proposed transportation facility is approximately 63 miles long. More information on this project can be obtained at <http://www.dot.ca.gov/d7/env-docs/docs/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:** On July 13, 2016 the applicant notified BLM of their intent to withdraw their application.

### **Lucerne Valley Solar**

**BLM Action:** The applicant, Celtic Energy, LLC, filed an application for a 45 megawatt solar photovoltaic facility to be constructed and operated on approximately 516 acres of public lands in Lucerne Valley.

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

**Status:** An application and draft plan of development (POD) have been filed. Funding to process the application has been requested. The site was previously analyzed under the Chevron Energy Solutions FEIS in October 2010.

### **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 late 2016. A visit to the site was conducted in April

and protective measures were identified.

**Agency:** BLM, Barstow Field Office

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

**Status:** Administrative biological and cultural reports are being finalized. Anticipate the publication of an environmental assessment in the first half of Fiscal Year 2017.

### **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 California Historic Route 66 Association (CHR66A) in sponsorship with the BLM California Desert District hosted a Route 66 Tourism and Economic Development Symposium at the Ramada in Barstow on May 18, 2016. The sold out event featured guest speakers from across the United States who shared their expertise regarding how they used Route 66 revitalization projects to increase community tourism and economic development opportunities.

On Monday, July 11, the Barstow City Council approved the Barstow Route 66 Downtown Specific Plan, a component of the City's update of its General Management Plan. The Barstow Plan adopted numerous marketing/tourism recommendations outlined in the Route 66 Corridor Management Plan.

Utilizing lessons learned from the symposium and "Next Steps" outlined in the Barstow Route 66 Downtown Plan, local citizens formed the Barstow Route 66 Association (BR66A) in July 2016. The BR66A includes members of the Barstow City Council, Chamber of Commerce and Business District, CHR66A and the BLM.

The group's first project included steam cleaning the sidewalks between Barstow Road and 2<sup>nd</sup> Street, in preparation of the City's 18<sup>th</sup> Annual Main Street Mural Program and the 2<sup>nd</sup> Annual Route 66 Festival on October 15, which also will celebrate the 90<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the dedication of Route 66 in November 1926.

BR66A members painted the facade and side of a main street office building on Saturday, September 24. Sponsors donated the paint and painting materials. Additional revitalization projects will be scheduled in the following months.

## **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:** In July 2016, the Marine Corps notified BLM of their plans to utilize the Johnson Valley Shared Use Area for military training from August 1-30, 2017 and of the associated temporary closure.

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.

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.

### **Special Recreation Permits**

**BLM Action:** Fiscal Year 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  
Cecilia Franklin, Volunteer Coordinator, Barstow Field Office

**Status:** For Fiscal Year 2016, a total of 172 Special Recreation Permits (SRP) were administered by the Barstow Field Office (124 vending permits and 48 recreation related permits). Most of the recreation related SRPs entailed motorized race events. There was a total of 83 SRP recreation events in Fiscal Year 2016, with several being multi-

day events. Most of the vending occurred within the Dumont Dunes OHV Area and Johnson Valley OHV Recreation Area.

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

**BLM Action:** Fiscal Year 2016

**Agency:** BLM, Barstow Field Office

**Contact:** Cecilia Franklin, Volunteer Coordinator, Barstow Field Office

**Status:** For Fiscal Year 2016, a total of 98 film permits were 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.

### **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

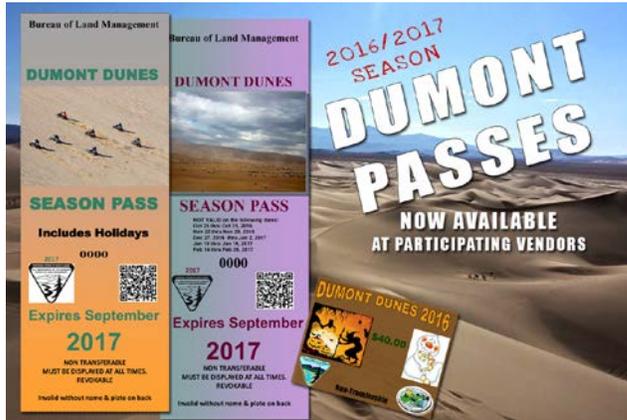
**Status:** The Dumont Dunes Subgroup, under the authority of the California Desert District Desert Advisory Council, continues to provide input to the BLM regarding issues pertinent to the Dumont Dunes OHV Area. The next meeting will be held at Dumont Dunes on Saturday, November 26 at 10:00 a.m. near the visitor center. The subgroup will introduce themselves, give an update, recruit for new subgroup members and allow for public comment.

The subgroup also decided on a safety message for duners arriving and departing the Dumont Dunes OHV Area. Stay Safe, Stay Alive entrance sign was created with photos from the Dumont Dune Rider webmaster, Pete Greep. His photos were also used on this year's season pass that includes the holidays.

The BLM Barstow Field Office is gearing up for the upcoming OHV season. A contract for vault toilet cleaning has been awarded to James "Jimmy" Lynn of Lynn Construction. He is a fellow off-roader and has done some other BLM contract work throughout the California Desert District.



Season Passes are now available at the Barstow Field Office and through participating vendors.



**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 77,591 visitors which is a 42% increase from our 2015 visitation.

The Friends of El Mirage continue to work on their 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. Currently they are focused on lakebed maintenance and operation of the visitor center.

Next step for the El Mirage Visitor Center is a contract to secure a vendor to develop a schematic design for the Visitor Center exhibits. A statement of work for the contract process is near completion. Once a budget is determined, the procurement process can move forward.

On October 22, 2016, the BLM and the Friends of Desert Discovery Center are hosting a Mad Hatter Safe-TEA Party at the El Mirage OHV Area located at 20471 Mountain View Rd., El Mirage, CA 92301. Activities begin at 11:00 a.m. with community partners set up for a day focused on desert safety and preparedness. Partners include Friends of Desert Discovery Center, San Bernardino County Search and Rescue, San Bernardino County Fire, El Mirage Improvement Association, California State Parks, Community Emergency Response Team of Phelan, and Forever Wild. McGruff the Crime Dog will be on hand to keep kids safe as they participate in various safety game booths. Attendees will receive a SAFE-TEA passport while they travel to various displays featuring topics such as Tread Lightly, desert safety and wildlife, emergency response, fire prevention, and search and rescue just to name a few. Come on out and

meet the Mad Hatter and his crazy costumed companions while enjoying a day of stewardship and safety.

### **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 DDC 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:** California's 4th annual Old Spanish Trail Day Celebration kicks off at the BLM's DDC on October 1, 2016 with an action-packed day of hands-on history that engages the entire community. Activities are scheduled from 10:00 a.m. to 3:00 p.m.

Co-sponsored by the DDC partnership and Old Spanish Trail Association, the event is expected to draw over 1,000 people who will enjoy 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 will take the crowds back in time to the 1800's where they will share stories and hands-on activities of life along the Old Spanish Trail.

The DDC will be closed for renovation through a capital improvement project from October 15, 2016 to mid-January 2017. Programs will continue off-site at the BLM Barstow Field Office, Barstow Library and the Mojave National Preserve Headquarters.

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

**BLM Action:** West Mojave (WEMO) 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 August 12, 2016, the BLM and Plaintiffs jointly filed a status report and stipulated motion for an order setting the schedule on BLM's motion for enlargement of time for completing the revised California Desert Conservation Area (CDCA) Plan Amendment and Off-Highway Vehicle (OHV) route designations for the West Mojave planning area.

A Status Conference was held on August 18, 2016, and the Court directed the Parties to meet and confer on a time line and proposed interim resource protection measures prior to BLM filing an enlargement motion. Also on August 18, 2016, the Court issued an order setting the schedule for BLM's motion for enlargement of time (September 15, 2016), Plaintiff's cross-motion for interim resource protection measures and responses to the motion for enlargement of time (October 13, 2016), BLM's response and reply (November 10, 2016), Plaintiffs' reply (November 29, 2016) and hearing on BLM's motion for enlargement (December 13, 2016).

In conformance with the Court's direction at the conclusion of the August 18 status conference, the Parties conferred by conference call on September 8, 2016.

On September 15, 2016, BLM filed a Notice of Motion and Motion for Enlargement of Time to complete the revised CDCA Amendment and OHV route designations for the WEMO planning area. The relief requested by the motion is an order providing that: (1) BLM publish the Notice of Availability (NOA) of the new Draft Supplemental Environmental Impact Statement (SEIS) and Draft Travel Management Plans (TMP) by January 2018; (2) BLM publish the NOA of the Final SEIS and Proposed TMPs by April 2019; and (3) issue the WEMO Plan Amendment Record of Decision (ROD) and TMP RODs by October 2019.

BLM continues Phase I (aerial map GIS review) for establishment of the ground-disturbance baseline for the WEMO planning area as described in the Record of Decision for the Desert Renewable Energy Conservation Plan issued on September 14, 2016. Phase II (field verification) for establishment of the ground-disturbance baseline commenced in August 2016 and is anticipated to be completed by June 2017.

In August 4, 2016, BLM issued a Draft Historic Properties Management Plan (HPMP) for a 45-day review and comment period which ended on September 19, 2016. BLM received two comment letters. Public comment was incorporated, as appropriate, and on September 30, 2016, BLM submitted a Proposed Final HPMP to the California State Historic Preservation Office for concurrence by that Office.

Pursuant to the National Historic Preservation Act Section 106 Programmatic Agreement (PA) that was signed in September 2015, BLM held the third of three annual WEMO Consulting Parties meetings on September 14, 2016. In addition to providing

the Consulting Parties an update on the WEMO PA implementation, the meeting provided another opportunity to comment on the Draft HPMP.

BLM continues field-testing of the archaeological resources Sensitivity Model using field crews to gather on-the-ground inventory data to cycle back into the model. During this last quarter, cultural resource inventory crews have surveyed an additional 1,489 acres, bringing the total field-testing in fiscal year 2016 to 5,060 acres.

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.

### **Grazing Lease Renewals**

**BLM Action:** Grazing lease renewals

**Agency:** BLM, Barstow Field Office

**Contact:** Anthony Chavez, Rangeland Management Specialist, Barstow Field Office

**Status:** The BFO will be preparing environmental documents in Fiscal Year 2017 to respond to applications for renewal of expiring livestock grazing leases. The need for this action is established by the Taylor Grazing Act, the Federal Land Policy and Management Act, Fundamentals of Range Health (43 CFR 4180), and the California Desert Conservation Area (CDCA) Plan, as amended.

A Project Scoping Report for the renewal of a 10-year grazing lease for the Ord Mountain Allotment was issued on September 23. The end of the public comment period is October 24, 2016.