

Desert Advisory Council (DAC)

Imperial Sand Dunes Recreation Area (ISDRA)

Sub-Group Update

April 18, 2013

Agenda for Meeting:

1. Welcome new members
2. Season close-out briefing
3. ISDRA RAMP status
4. ISDRA Business Plan Update Highlights

Call-In information (888) 946-3809 / Passcode - 38927

BLM Action: DAC ISDRA Sub Group Update

Contact: Teri Raml, Desert District Manager (Designated Federal Officer)

Status: On March 20th, 2013, BLM announced the selection of two new ISDRA Subgroup members, Ed Stovin, representing OHV Organizations, and Tom Acuna, representing CA OHV interests. They replace Larry Jowdy, the Vice Chair who had been on the sub-group since 1999, and Bob Mason of the American Sand Association.

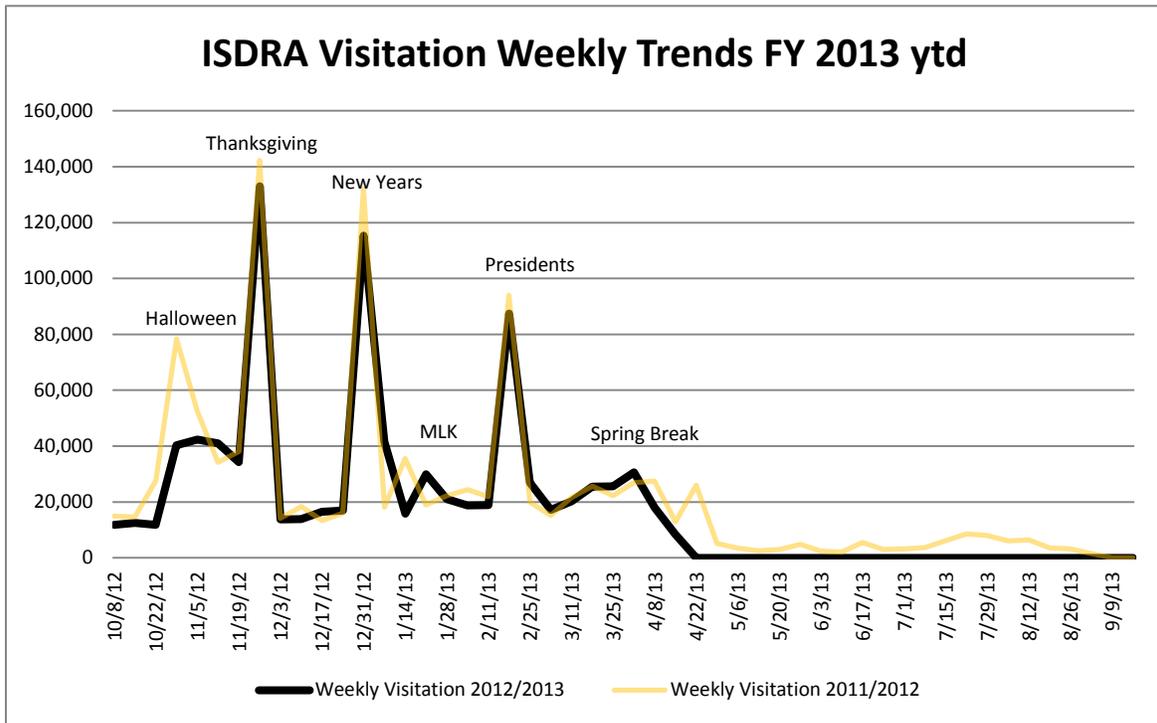
BLM Action: ISDRA Update

Contact: Neil Hamada, ISDRA Dunes Manager

Status:

- YTD FY 2013 visitation is 900,308 a 10% decrease compared to the same time last year.
- Ranger Stations are scheduled to close on Friday, April 19th due to increasing temperatures and decreasing visitation.
- All EMS/ Rescue Seasonal Park Rangers have been released from duty. One permanent Park Ranger and one Intern Park Ranger remain on staff. Several seasonal positions for FY 2014 are being advertised on www.usajobs.opm.gov through the end of August, however we are unsure how sequestration will affect the hiring process.
- OHV Grant funded projects
 - Current projects
 - Closure signing.
 - Trash collection through May.
 - EMS / Rescue service.
 - Law enforcement patrols.

- New applications for next grant cycle
 - ECFO Law Enforcement (part ISDRA) - \$600,000
 - ISDRA Education - \$10,000 for map reprinting
 - ISDRA Ground Ops - \$145,000 for facility maintenance.
 - ISDRA Safety - \$105,000 for EMS/Rescue services.
- Holiday Weekends – BLM received positive comments from visitor contacts regarding the improved family atmosphere, and cleanliness of the restrooms.
 - Presidents’ Day visitation was 87,463, down from last year’s visitation.
 - The table below summarizes some of the statistics from the holiday weekends. These statistics do not include the non-holiday weekends.



	Halloween	Thanksgiving	New Years	Presidents' Day
Visitation	82,000	133,000	115,000	87,000
Medical Incidents	41	94	37	45
L.E. Contacts	6,074	7,932	10,507	7,283
L.E. Warnings	1,123	1,122	1,040	1,206
Citations	408	507	463	446
Arrests	43	32	55	32

- Education programs
 - Continued emphasis on: OHV safety and new ROV laws, RAMP, and Business Plan.
 - The BLM's Official ISDRA webpage (www.blm.gov/ca/isdra) was viewed 83,833 times between September, 2012 and March 2013. The permit information, law enforcement questions, camping information, and RAMP were the most popular sites.
 - ISDRA Facebook (www.facebook.com/blmimperialsanddunes) currently over 1,366 likes since September 2012. At peak, over 30,000 people were reached in one week. Discussion/Notification topics have included: Sand removal and campground maintenance work, littering, emergency road closures, emergency phone line inoperable, MLK Clean up event, ISDRA history, Photo Friday, ISDRA job postings, meeting notifications, safety messages, holiday weekend updates, ATV safety classes, traffic /road updates, wildlife education, fee program information, partnerships, lots of photos, and more.
 - Continue to work together with UDG to provide guides, maps, Frisbees, and "Dune Guard" shirts, at ISDRA.
 - Worked together with American Desert Foundation to fill ATV safety classes this season.
 - Partnered with Imperial County, UDG, ASA, and Kawasaki to fund new kiosk panels for next season.

BLM Action: ISDRA Facility Maintenance

Contact: Neil Hamada, ISDRA Dunes Manager

Status: Complaints were received on Facebook about the road leading into Ogilby Camp Area after the road was degraded by storms. Reports indicated RVs were getting stuck in deep sand. BLM repaired the road in February result in in the following Facebook feedback:

[Paul Herbert](#) Woohoo, looks like ogilby road is getting some much needed love.

February 7 at 8:30am Via mobile · Like · 1

[Tim Wight](#) Thank you very much!

That road was in dire need of maintenance.

February 7 at 11:48am Via mobile · Like

[Imperial Sand Dunes Recreation Area](#) You are welcome! We hope to see you out in the sand!

February 7 at 11:59am · Like

[Eric Lokken](#) Gordon Wells next I hope. I'm too old for vehicle recovery. Keep up the good work . Thanks to all involved.

February 7 at 12:39pm · Like

[Michelle Verna](#) Fantastic!!! Shhh, please don't tell anyone. We like having the area to ourselves.

February 7 at 6:45pm · Like

[Marc P Walston](#) Looks like a government job..... For sure!!

February 7 at 8:07pm Via [mobile](#) · [Like](#)

[Kevin Perry](#) Thank you - We love the Ogilby area, but hated the road. No we have the best of both worlds - Thanks again!

February 14 at 7:24am · [Like](#)

[Darcy Grizzle](#) yes it was wonderful driving into Ogilby this Presidents day, you did a great job on the road.

February 23 at 8:12am · [Like](#)

- Toilet pumping contract was extended and will be out for bid this summer.
- Trash collection contract continues and expires at the end of the FY 2014 season.
- ISDRA's one seasonal maintenance worker providing service through mid May. He continues to get compliments on the cleanliness of the toilets but struggles to keep up with costly vandalism and repairs.
- The newly installed toilet paper hangers allowed for sufficient supply for visitors during holidays. This allowed BLM to schedule a daily cleaning route without running out of paper.
- Sand removal has been a priority during the spring winds and repairs have been completed on Midway Campground pad, Wash Road, and Ogilby Camp Road. BLM has been able to keep all roads and campgrounds open during the 2012/13 dunes season.
- Buttercup Ranger Station parking lot had repairs completed around the walkways where the asphalt was heaping.
- Cahuilla Ranger Station roof repairs have been completed.



BLM Action: ISDRA RAMP Update

Contact: Greg Hill / Neil Hamada

Status: Protests have been addressed, briefings have been completed, waiting for one more non-BLM approval before ROD is signed and plan is printed.

BLM Action: Volunteers

Contact: Neil Hamada

Status: Homer Himes, camp host at Buttercup Ranger Station, is still working full time. He works on site all year and continues to maintain the facility, vault toilets, vehicle counters, and campground. He also greets the constant flow of visitors throughout the year and provides them information about the area, OHV safety information, and educates visitors about the historic Plank Road.

We are currently recruiting volunteers to be camp hosts. For more information, visit <http://www.blm.gov/ca/st/en/fo/elcentro/recreation/ohvs/isdra/dunesinfo/volunteers.html>

When the toilet cleaning contract expired, Homer stepped up and began maintaining the vault toilets in the southern portion of the dunes. It became apparent that he needed to have the right equipment to do the job. The BLM maintenance staff built him a trailer out of scrap material, hung the UDG magnet on the trailer, and Homer pulls it behind a donated ROV from Kawasaki.



Figure 1 - Nails in Buttercup collected in the first 100 yards.



Figure 2 - Homer, donated ROV, donated magnet, and trailer made from scrap materials.

BLM Action: ECFO Law Enforcement Update

Contact: Ian Canaan, Chief Law Enforcement Ranger

Status: El Centro Field Office Law Enforcement staff is in the process of bringing the 2012-2013 OHV season to a close. In doing so, best practices are being identified for the 2013-2014 season, and changes are being implemented.

Some of the cost savings measures already implemented are:

1. Reducing the length of the holiday details.
2. Reducing the number of detailed Rangers from outside states. The current size of the details will be maintained for the foreseeable future. This level of staffing is the minimum to maintain a safe environment for the recreating public and also for the staff.
3. Increasing the number of Forest Service Law Enforcement Officers requested. This is primarily because of the short travel distances, minimizing overtime and travel costs.
4. Negotiated lodging rates at a local hotel, instead of the standard government rate.
5. Increased utilization of NAF El Centro.

Some of the pending cost savings measures are:

1. Shared law enforcement positions with other states and districts, specifically during the summer months. The offices selected to participate in this program will fund all Ranger expenses while the Ranger is working in their office.
2. Adjustments to the fleet, specifically the type of vehicles utilized by Rangers.
3. Requesting additional funding from the Washington Office.
4. El Centro Law Enforcement was recently awarded a Polaris TRAILS grant for protective equipment for Rangers and OHV accessories. This included new helmets, goggles and backpacks for each Ranger, and new LED lighting and GPS for two OHV's.

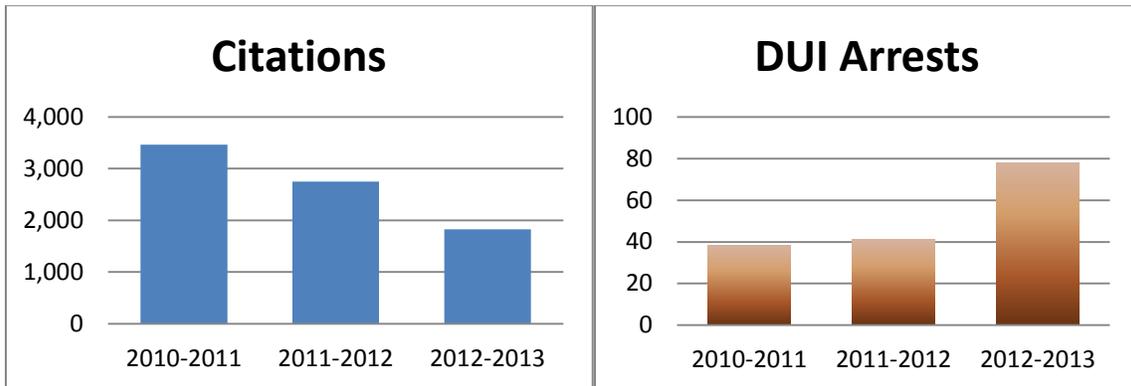
The El Centro Field Office is currently staffed with 12 Law Enforcement Rangers. The authorized staff is 16. Included in the 12 are a Chief Ranger, Supervisory Ranger and 2 San Diego Resident Rangers. Eleven of the 12 Rangers are fully functional, with one in the final phase of his training. As funding allows, it is critical to get the vacant Supervisory Ranger position filled.

2012-2013 Holiday Weekend Season Activity

Total Law Enforcement Contacts	31,963	Notes
Total Warning Issued	4,491	14% of total contacts
Total Citations Issued	1,824	5% of total contacts

2012-2013 Season when compared to two previous seasons:

	2010-2011	2011-2012	2012-2013	Notes
Citations	3,465	2,750	1,824	Decrease of 48% from 2010-11 and 34% from 2011-12
DUI Arrests	38	41	78	Increase of 105% from 2010-11 and 90% from 2011-12
Total Arrests	144	104	161	Increase of 54% from 2011-2012
Visitation	453,000	469,000	417,000	Decrease of 8% from 2010-11 and 11% from 2011-2012



Although visitation has dropped, law enforcement activity has increased, especially as it related to crimes. DUI arrests were the highest they have been in recent years. Similarly, narcotics arrests saw a substantial increase, primarily felony cases involving the distribution, possession with the intent to distribute and possession of felony drugs.

For the 2013-2014 OHV Season we will staff an OHV team during all holiday weekends. This team will focus on the areas which are inaccessible to other patrol vehicles. Closure areas, areas with large concentrations of people and DUI enforcement will be the primary objectives of the OHV team. These Rangers will primarily utilize UTV/ROV's and ATV's equipped with law enforcement equipment.

In addition to ISDRA OHV related activity, Rangers are also busy with non-ISDRA land management cases. We are currently working on four trespass/conversion cases and several substantial unlawful dumping cases. We are also working a number of cases involving commercial operations on public land, without permits or approval. These cases are significant to the protection of public lands. Rangers are also preparing for a busy marijuana eradication season in California and will be detailed throughout the state

to assist with these cases. In the West Desert and San Diego County, Rangers are working a number of resource damage cases.

BLM Action: Emergency Medical Services / Search and Rescue Update

Contact: Brian Puckett, Park Ranger

Status: Over the past 2012/2013 season, EMS/SAR calls were down 20% from FY12, but were on par with FY11. This season, we noticed differences and trends in both injuries and severity between north and south dunes. In general, patients in the north dunes tended to be more severe status, were in more remote areas, and we received fewer minor injury patients. In the south dunes, patients tended to be moderate status in accessible areas with about the same numbers of minor injury patients as years past. Five fatalities occurred, one as the result of OHV trauma.

Statistics for this season include the North Dunes having 77% of total EMS calls, with 83% of all helicopter transports, 47% of all ground ambulance transports, and 87% of all severe patients. The South Dunes had 23% of total EMS calls, 15% of all helicopter transports, 53% of all ground ambulance transports, and 13% of all severe patients. These differences led to different levels of staffing, vehicle use, and response. As a result of the ISDRA EMS summit the BLM coordinated last year, we have been able to follow up on ISDRA patients that have been transferred out of county. We have been able to document outcomes on 85% of our patients transported out by helicopter, and of those patients, the three leading diagnosis were: 45% were diagnosed with a moderate to severe traumatic brain injury, 45% diagnosed with significant spinal cord and vertebral trauma, and 39% were diagnosed with moderate to severe internal injuries which resulted in immediate surgery. These patients were operating all types of OHV's, and in general, they were utilizing protective equipment at the time of injury.

With the call and severity differences, staffing and response levels varied dependent on location. The Glamis/Gecko area was staffed with 2/3^{rds} of our seasonal park rangers and lead by a Permanent Park Ranger Paramedic. The Gordons Well / Greys Well areas were staffed by the remaining seasonals and lead by an intern Park Ranger EMT. We hired a total of seven seasonal Park Rangers whose seasons were shortened four weeks each due sequestration.

We have been partnering with Imperial County EMS Department, US Border Patrol, and El Centro Regional Medical Center to provide greater EMS training opportunities to ISDRA staff. This includes co-sponsoring and instructing the first Advanced EMT course in Imperial County to meet National Registry requirements which will result in greater levels of care provided in the field by ISDRA staff. One intern Park Ranger and one Law Enforcement Ranger have successfully completed the classroom phase and are currently working both in hospital and in ambulances for the clinical and field training phases. Further education opportunities will include greater partnerships and training with US Border Patrol to help provide increased and enhanced EMS to ISDRA visitors.

We have applied for CA OHV Safety grant funding to help supplement EMS expenditures for the 2013/2014 season in the ISDRA. Based on the outcome of that grant funding, we will be looking to hire seasonal Park Rangers along with purchasing supplies and equipment to help provide EMS in the ISDRA, however the specifics will depend on the levels of funding awarded. Summer projects will include maintaining vehicles (both trucks and sand rails), closing the ranger stations, closing out grants, and prep work and set up for the 2013/2014 season.



We recently received a few compliments that we wanted to share with you. This was received via e-mail:

Thank You to your staff!!!!

I wanted to send a heartfelt THANK YOU to the staff of the Cahuilla Ranger Station. My family was camping at Glamis for the New Year's holiday on Gecko road pad 2, on December 28th around 9:00 pm my son was injured with a broken femur about 20 feet from camp. Your staff was dispatched and provided us excellent service. The -----family wanted to let you know that your staff showed much compassion, acted promptly by dispatching necessary medical support; they made a very stressful situation bearable for our family. We appreciate the services you provide to us at Glamis and the job you do. We wanted to personally Thank you for this. Your staff obviously loves their jobs and it shows! Thank you very much!!!Sincerely, The ----- Family

The following was posted at <http://www.ivpressonline.com/opinion/ivp-opinion-our-view-dunes-season-comes-to-a-close-20130404,0,3062650.story>. The quote was in the "Our View" section of the Imperial Valley Press.

"As much as UDG and local sheriff's deputies and ambulance drivers do during the dunes season, no one works harder than U.S. Bureau of Land Management rangers charged with keeping order in the sand."

"Some visitors think a getaway to the dunes means a getaway from the rules of society. People imbibing things that shouldn't be imbibed, or shouldn't be imbibed so freely, can be a big problem at the dunes.

The rangers are tasked with putting such folks back in line and also making sure dunes riders indulge in their passion with as much safety as possible. And the wonderful thing is the rangers generally keep order in the dunes with smiles on their faces."