

**Desert Advisory Council**  
**Imperial Sand Dunes Recreation Area Subgroup**  
**Meeting Minutes**

*May 22, 2014*

***Attendance:***

Tom Acuna- CA OHV  
Bob Ham- Local Community  
Karen Brindley- CA OHV  
Ed Stovin- CA OHV  
Tom Zale- BLM  
Stephanie Clark- BLM  
Neil Hamada- BLM  
Brian Puckett- BLM  
Daniel Baca- BLM

Nicole Gilles- Public  
Dick Holiday- Public  
Charla Teeters- Public  
Jim Bramham- Public via phone  
Chuck Hattaway- Public via phone

**Absent**

Don Wharton- Local Community  
Lee Banning- AZ OHV

**Call-in Information: 888-790-3556/ Passcode – 36808**

**Meeting called to order at 9:35 A.M. by Tom Acuna**

**Welcome, Introductions, and Previous Meeting Minutes- Tom Acuna**

- Meeting called to order at 9:35 A.M. by Tom Acuna. The meeting began with the Pledge of Allegiance (led by Ed Stovin) and introduction of subgroup members, (including newest member, Karen Bindley), BLM employees (including new Law Enforcement Chief, Stephanie Clark), and members of the public in attendance.
- Tom Acuna thanked Neil Hamada for having agenda weeks in advance.
- Tom Acuna asked subgroup members to take a moment to review the meeting minutes from the previous subgroup meeting and address any questions or concerns.
- **Bob Ham moved to pass and accept the notes. Chuck Hattaway seconded the motion. A vote was held and the motion passed unanimously.**

**Subgroup Chairperson Report**

- Tom Acuna began the report by revisiting the Imperial Sand Dunes Recreation Area site tour the DAC-Subgroup attended on April 11th, 2014. Subgroup members visited Buttercup Ranger Station, the Buttercup Campground, The Plank Road, irrigation canal, the kiosks at Gordon's Well, and the Glamis area. Tom Acuna was impressed with the equipment the ISDRA staff uses. Tom stated that the group visited the Wash Road and

got a good feeling of the area as well as the dust problem along the Wash Road. Tom then stated, "I was personally very impressed with how many visitors you [the BLM ISDRA] deal with. I got a much better understanding of what you guys [the BLM] deal with out there." Tom Acuna asked the group members who attended the tour to share their thoughts. Karen Bindley- "It was very invaluable going out there. The educational output is huge for the general visitors because of lack of understanding of all the services the BLM provides." Ed Stovin- "I was very impressed with the rescue buggies and their set-up. Neil showed us the law enforcement, and hole in the wall with what LE deals with. It was nice to be shown in your perspective." Tom Acuna added that, Congresswoman [Rebecca Terrazas-Baxter, Representative of Congressman Juan Vargas, who was in attendance of the tour] was very interested in geography and what we do out there. She was especially interested in the geography around Wash 10."

- Tom Acuna continued the report with a current status on the DAC. Tom Acuna shared that Randy Danis [the Chair of the DAC] has now become Vice-Chair and April Song has now become the Chair of the DAC. Randy has three more meetings left in the DAC as Chair. Acuna- "Randy is fantastic person to work with. April Song wonderful person to work with as well. [April] preserves and protects resources." Zale-"I agree with you in that Randy does a wonderful job and am glad he will continue to participate as DAC Vice Chair." Acuna- "I think we're all well served in the DAC."
- Acuna moved on to address subgroup appointments.

Subgroup Appointments:

Zale: Don Wharton exp. In December, 2014

Bob Ham renewed December of 2016 for Local Community

Braham December, 2014

Acuna exp. In 2016

Karen Rep. CA OHV April of 2016

Ed Stovin- CA OHV March 2015

Chuck Hattaway re-appointed April 2016

The group pointed out that there is a vacant position for President of AZ OHV and they are currently in an open period for nominations. There were no nominees for this past go around for President of AZ OHV. Jim-"The DAC has not nominated a representative from their group [AZ OHV] at this time and I think the nominations for new DAC members are being considered by section of interior. Unfortunately we don't have a control of when we make

those appointments.” Acuna- “I think we’re really well staffed and will continue with what we have.”

- A discussion was held about re-applying as a subgroup participant and more terms.

Jim Bramham had a question about how many terms can be served, Jim- “Can I re-apply or have I termed out?” Neil Hamada explained that members can serve a three year term with an option to serve a second term, that way, there’s always continuity to group. Acuna- “I find that confusing.”

### **Subgroup Structure**

Acuna asked members to review subgroup structure and mission document. Acuna went around and asked the members if they had any thoughts starting with Tim, Chuck, Jim, Ed and Karen. Jim and Chuck did not have physical copies. Neil Hamada sent them a copy via email. Once they received the email, Jim and Chuck took a minute to look at the document.

While the subgroup looked over the subgroup structure and mission document, Tom Zale held a discussion about how the DAC was formed. Tom explained what exactly the DAC is and how the DAC was formed. Karen- “Because this is an advisory group, who are we advising?” Tom- “You’re advising Teri Raml, Teri gets the advice, but we hear it.” Karen- “Does the DAC have any advisory toward financial expenditures?” Tom- “The DAC doesn’t get involved in budget or personnel management.” Bob- “FLEMMA established the first committee in 1981. The DAC’s real responsibility comes from amending the plan because it was a dynamic plan, that’s the bases for the current DAC.” Bob discussed how the DAC was formed and a discussion was held about how the advice gets to the BLM.

- Jim stated that he did not see a lot of changes to subgroup structure and mission statement. Neil- offered to summarize the edits. The only edits were in section on bottom of first page that is underlined. Neil- “To summarize, we modified the text to match the DAC authority. In the underlined section we have some changes that the DAC will appoint a subgroup chairperson instead of voting.” Acuna- “Do we need to vote on this or is it just the way it is?” Neil- “I believe it is better to have a motion to consensus and have a motion.”
- Group decided to have a discussion about subject matter. Karen- “Everything looks good as far as mission etc. I see that the subgroup is summarizing sections to recommend to DAC.” Karen recommended that the subgroup give recommendations, instead of just summarizing. Jim- “We do give recommendations and they are reported to the DAC.” Jim agreed and stated that, “We’ve have been less than honored in the report we give to the DAC.”
- Karen - “How are meetings conducted? I feel it’s important to have some sort of understanding and have knowledge on how meetings are structured. Is it under Roberts’s Rule of Order?” The group discussed how meetings are structured and

stated that topic would be an agenda item for next time. Agenda Item for next meeting: Roberts's Rule of Order in organizing how meetings are conducted.

- Bob Ham brought up the Meeting Schedule and how the subgroup should have a meeting on a Saturday to encourage more public participation. Bob- "We should revisit a Saturday or an evening meeting to generate more people." Acuna- "It's more of a mandate." A discussion was then held about how the subgroup used to generate people to participate in meetings in the past, and how the group should go about obtaining more people in future meetings. The group came together and agreed they should change the wording on the meeting schedule in order to obtain more people at future meetings. The group held a discussion about changing the wording under the Meeting Schedule to instead of reading:

"Projected three meeting per year, typically a pre-season, mid-season, and post-season meeting (*with preference for at least one on a Saturday to encourage public participation*)...."

To read:

"Projected three meetings per year, typically a pre-season, mid-season and post season meeting (*consideration will be given to selecting a date and time to maximize public participation*)...."

- Acuna asked members to proceed with next topic and asked for a motion to accept changes in wording under the Meeting Schedule at 10:34A.M.
  - **Ed Stovin filled out paper for motion and asked for Motion to accept modifications made to meeting schedule to the writing as Neil noted. Bob Ham second the motion by Ed Stovin. Motion was passed unanimously by group members.**
- Nominating and voting a Vice-Chair for the subgroup was discussed. Tom Acuna pointed out that there is currently no Vice-Chair in the subgroup and that one must be appointed.

Tom- "Obviously the vice chair is going to run me when I'm not here. They're going facilitate and discuss topics. Every subgroup member has a right to facilitate discussion of topics; it's just a matter of who's my back up. So with that being said, who wants to nominate?" Bob- "I want to nominate Ed." Jim agreed to motion the nomination of Ed Stovin as Vice-Chair. Karen- "What's the term of the Chair and Vice-Chair appointments?" Neil- "I don't think that's covered in the structure." A discussion was held about how long the appointments of the Chair and Vice-Chair

are. Brian Puckett confirmed that it's a 1 year term as written in the subgroup structure. Acuna asked if there any other nominations. Tom-"You can nominate yourself!" There were no other nominations. Karen seconded the motion of nomination for Ed Stovin as Vice-Chair of Subgroup.

**Vote was taken by subgroup members to nominate Ed Stovin as the new Vice-Chair of subgroup. Vote was unanimous by all members and Ed Stovin was welcomed aboard by Tom Acuna as the new Vice-Chair of DAC ISDRA Subgroup.**

Tom Acuna proceeded to move on to next item on agenda.

### **BLM Report:**

- Tom Zale: "So we've kind of covered the things I wanted to touch up with, so we'll start the report off with Neil."
- Neil Hamada, Daniel Baca and Brian Puckett provided an Imperial Sand Dunes Recreation Area Update.
- Neil began the report by asking subgroup members to refer to the packet that was right in front of them. Neil-"We're skipping the first section, Tom already went over that. Second section; we've closed down the stations both north and south for the summer. We'll be re-opening next October after it starts to cool down. We have applied for OHV grants through the green sticker program. For a total of \$718,000.00 and we'll be applying for the same type of operations that we have in the past which are safety, that is the medical rescue stuff that we do, ground ops, which is maintenance, toilet cleaning, sand removal off the road ways, and law enforcement, which is self-explanatory. Except keep in mind that that particular application is for the entire BLM field office not just the dunes. And our fee program is the funding source allows us to apply for those because we need to have match. This past season we tried something new offering outreach programs throughout the dunes. Some of them were successful; some of them weren't too successful. I think the high visitation on one of those events was 40 people there? What was it Brian?" Brian- "We had 70 something come out to drunk driver awareness there to the foothills of Oldsmobile Hill." Neil- "This is a partnership that we've been doing with United Desert Gateway. Charla is here and she purchased some of the equipment for some of those outreach programs. Our Park Rangers and EMT's, Paramedics, and EMT advanced people were out there providing that education out in the dunes. We're going to continue with that but were going to be scaling it back. Our goal this year was to end up doing 20, we ended up doing 21 in order to get points for our OHV fund project. Our Facebook page still continues to be very active. Let's see, we are at 3555 likes. It's gone up even since we prepared this for you a few weeks ago. We had a new record of 77,000 people reached in one week. So very very useful tool. If you haven't got a chance to go online and like our page, please do so. We continue to work with Charla on our outreach

programs. We have several of them. Neil explained the Dune Card Program to new members in attendance at meeting. “We worked together with ASA, UDG, and Kawasaki in rehabbing our kiosks out in the dunes and they look great! We are in the process of working together with them again because our map has changed and that’s a huge part of the kiosk. Neil went on and discussed the record of decision. “As most of you know the Record of Decision for our management plan was upheld in court. We are now in implantation process. Brian and Daniel have pounded many signs in this summer out in the heat, in dangerous conditions, as well as coordinating events out in the dunes for sign removal.” Neil referred to packet about kiosks and panels and explained the process of how the panels are rotated throughout the dunes. “The fee period came to close this year on April 15<sup>th</sup>, the first time since we started the fee program. Lots of smiles from the people out there when they find out they don’t have to pay for a permit. Neil gave the visitation report. Visitation is on the same trend since 2006, about a 5% drop every single year and it continues on that trend. Permit compliance is about the same.” Neil asked if there were any questions on his section of the report before moving on. There were no questions.

- Brian Puckett gave a report on EMS/SAR in the dunes.

Neil asked Jim and Chuck if they had a copy of the medical report. They didn’t. Neil emailed them over a copy, as the members in attendance reviewed the report. Brian gave his report.

- Bob- “I’m curious on the UTV injuries with the new laws that went into effect, have you seen any correlation between the enforcement of those new laws and the number of injuries? Brian- “What we’ve seen is that last year we had a significant issue with people not wearing their helmet or even wearing their seatbelts in UTV’s. That was one of our targeted injury prevention campaigns for this year. And last year we had a lot of primarily closed head injuries, and this year we’ve seen kind of more inner abdominal type trauma. So without doing a proper report, you know, we’re doing our best but we are trying to get away from the head injuries and more towards the thorax type injuries.” Karen- “Can you provide a distinguishment between the north and south dunes?” Brian- “The best line we can kind of draw is in the previous closures, in the large central closure. There wasn’t anybody in the middle, and everything kind of south of Patton Valley was in the south dunes, and everything north of the north closure, China Wall and upwards, was north dunes. This next year we’re going to have to get a little more creative to figure out where we’re going to draw the line at.” Neil- “Because our visitation is about ¾ in what we call the north, which is Glamis and Gecko, and in the south, which we consider, Gordon’s, Gray’s and Ogilby, is about a 1/4. So we staff accordingly. We break our call back volume to geographically separate and

distinguish where the work level is. Generally if we're talking to public, they consider the north to be Glamis, Gecko and south dunes to be Gordon's, Grey's, and Ogilby." Karen- "Thank you." Ed- "Brian do you prepare the grant application?" Brian- "I do, yes." Ed- "How do I say this... if you got all that money, would it make you totally happy?" Brian, "There's always room to be happier! But with what we propose in this grant application, is what we're setting up our level at, based on the trends we've seen and what we can appropriately be able to pull from our fee account for match we feel like we're going to be able to add to the staff." Ed, "That'll make you happy? I review the grants and I always give you guys a good review." Dick- "Can you tell me what the criteria for dispatching the air support?" Brian- "It's pretty much based on provider discretion. So as we're in the field, what we kind of feel is the problem with the pt, is what the type of care we provide. Local hospitals here have certain type of capabilities, and other hospitals have other type of capabilities. So we have to try and figure out what's better for that pt. the first time." Neil- "This year was the first year we had all of the majority of our Park Rangers as EMT's. We had one First Responder which is just a step below [an EMT]. Brian trained up all our seasonals as EMT's. It's a three week intensive course that is not easy at all by any means. We also trained up Daniel here as an Advanced EMT. So the bang for our visitors buck a far as the medical service provided is very high, the highest it's ever been. Also this year Brian has instituted significant amounts of trainings.

Neil continued on to the next section of the report. Neil Hamada gave a RAMP update.

- Neil- "We are beginning the implementation process. What that means is the administrative closures, 49,300 acres are being removed and the critical habitat for PMV is being signed." Neil discussed that current closures have begun to be signed by Park Rangers and maintenance staff. Neil also shared that maintenance staff will hire seasonal staff to continue the new closures. Tom Acuna- "We as the subgroup should be particularly proud and pleased. I can't think of a more significant event in the last ten years. Where is it that the Federal Government closes 50,000 acres, roughly, and re-opens it up many years later after a long court case for recreational users? Where does that happen?" Ed- "It's unprecedented." Tom Zale- "I'm proud of the work we did on the RAMP. I think we came up with a real good balance that stresses not only resource protection and critical habitat for PMV as an example, but then also provides a real good balance in terms of creating opportunities for family friendly recreation. So I'm happy with the work we did."

The group gave each other praise and thanked each other for all the hard work the BLM, ASA, Center for Biological Diversity, and other interest groups in making the new RAMP uphold in court. Neil then proceeded with the maintenance report.

- Daniel Baca gave the subgroup a volunteer update. Tom- “This is definitely another pleasure island event [MLK Clean-up]. It’s tough to get volunteers to do things, but when you guys get this kind of turn out, how did you guys pull that out?” Neil-“Charla.” Tom- Ed- These volunteer hours, can you use that as a match in your grants?” Neil- “yes. For different projects. For the staking I plan on using for the restoration project that we have currently. And then for the clean-up we utilize for the O&M because that’s for trash.” Ed- “I can help you get a better grant.” A conversation was held about how successful the clean-up events were this year in the dunes.

### **Old Business**

Neil began with talking about the dust suppressant application to the Wash Road. A discussion was held about Ocotillo Wells, and how they’re managing their dust suppressant project. Alternatives were discussed, and subgroup members recommended that the BLM should reach out to APCD for assistance in managing the dust suppressant along the Wash Road. BLM agreed and informed the subgroup that they are working closely with Ocotillo Wells on how their project is going so far, so that hopefully in the near future BLM can “piggyback” on what Ocotillo Wells is doing in terms of managing their dust problem. BLM stated that they would like to wait a year and see what the results are from Ocotillo Wells dust suppressant project.

- Tom Acuna- “The wash road. If you were to come up with a suppressant, obviously that’d save you money in trucking, and water cost, and labor cost right? That would help your overall program if you can find something right?” Neil- “Yes. Correct.” Tom Zale- “We have to take advantage with Ocotillo Wells and what they’re doing.” Bob- “Is Ocotillo Wells working with APCD and results and so on?” Neil- “I went out there and did a site visit, they’re out there on the San Diego side, so I don’t know if they’re working with Imperial County APCD.” Bob- “Imperial County is the one who is still under the order of the EPA.” Bob- “You really ought to suggest they call in APCDA because ultimately they’re going to be the ones looking at what happens here. They’re going to need what’s going on when they do it on the rest of Ocotillo Wells so that they can be prepared when they continue they’re deal with EPA to stay in conformance.” Neil – “Ok.”

Neil moved on to second point which was the day permit request in the ISDRA. Neil stated the BLM, ASA, UDG, met together to discuss the possibilities the subgroup suggested.

- Nicole- “We talked about the logistics of trying to put together a day use type of permit and we first and foremost thought that logistically it might be difficult for several reasons, one of which is how to keep track with businesses. If someone

had to pay the permit fee and pick it up in Yuma then drop it off in Brawley, and try and get their money back and how that would work, we just couldn't agree. The other reason we had some concerns about the program is how that may alter the current fee contract. Because we don't know all the specifics of the contract and how that may impact the users. We could have issues with that...Logistically overall we just don't know how that would work." Charla from UDG also mentioned that the time frame also wouldn't work. With the ranger stations not being open 24 hours, visitors wouldn't have the option to just drop off the permit at one of the ranger stations. Charla- "Overall it was a good idea, but the logistical portion of it would just be too difficult. It seems you would almost have to hire people to run the program." Bob- "We're finding road blocks to what can essentially be an easy thing. You don't have to account for every single possibility. You have a place where a kid from Calexico or a kid from Westmorland can go to a place near the dunes within a certain 24 hour period. Let's not complicate this any more than it has to be, to look at tourist from Phoenix that want to drive through the dunes and go up to Dumont Dunes or something. Let's see if we can solve a problem for local kids who have a chance to get away and want to do a one day thing and don't have to buy a week or year pass. It doesn't have to be as overly complicated as it seems this meeting got into. I don't want this to be the final word. I'm not prepared to say this is the end of the one day pass." Tom- "Yeah, Yeah. We don't want to close the door on this; we want to continue to look at this. Thank you for looking at this matter." Tom Acuna questioned why the BLM does not have a daily permit. Neil discussed the pros and cons to having a daily permit. Neil informed the subgroup that in years past, the public hasn't asked for a daily permit and the cost to enforce would go up. A discussion was held about possibilities to continue to push for day-use permits in the ISDRA. The group agreed to re-visit the topic for next meeting in August.

- Tom Zale mentioned he wanted to re-implement ATV safety training for children out in the dunes. Tom also gave a status of the BLM ECFO's Law Enforcement activity. Tom welcomed the new chief. A letter was passed out that was sent to the ASA regarding the LE program in the dunes. See letter. Tom Acuna discussed the letter and the media regarding the BLM LE and they tend to overstate and say stuff that is not true. Tom Acuna- " I read the articles and complaints by the public against the BLM, and I thought your [Tom Zale's] letter as well as the members in the DAC blended together and you [Tom Zale] gave a wonderful response to the other side. The media, in my opinion, tends to take an article and overstate, depending on who they hear from and improvise and angle it...The media isn't always true. I myself feel better having le there and protecting my family." Stephanie- "I just wanted to assure you that as the new Chief, I

understand that we're here to serve public, I understand that. We do have priorities, were not going to limit our law enforcement, it's a real clear idea, but our mission is as le, we're going to go out there and we're going to make sure the public is safe, make sure the BLM employees are safe, and that our resources are protected. Obviously there are different methodologies to provide law enforcement and each one of my rangers is going to do their policing in a different manner. We will always evaluate what that best manner is, and make sure we provide good training to or rangers so they are serving the public in the best manner that they can. And every bit of input that you guys provide for us helps us be better rangers for you. And that's what we're here to do."

- Neil closed the old business by discussing RTP grants for Watchable Wildlife.

### **Public Comment Period**

Tom addressed that the public has been part-taking and giving feedback throughout the entire meeting and said that is ok because it is a small group. Tom noted that if this had been a bigger group, the public would have to wait until the public comment period to address and questions, concerns, or comments.

- Nicole-"Just wanted to let you know I've been live "tweeting" throughout the meeting."  
Neil shared the "tweets" to the group.  
Dick-"I'm glad to be able to come back down here and see everyone again."

### **Meeting adjourned at 12:19 P.M.**