

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

*August 6, 2015*

***Attendance:***

Bob Ham- Imperial County

Karen Brindley- CA OHV

Ed Stovin- OHV Organization

Chuck Hattaway- OHV Organization

Nicole Gilles- Local Community

Charla Teeters- Local Community

Dick Holiday- CA OHV

Tom Zale- BLM, Field Manager

Neil Hamada- BLM, Supervisory Outdoor Rec. Planner

Michelle Puckett- BLM, Outdoor Rec. Planner

Brian Puckett- BLM, Park Ranger

Julio Morales- IV Press

Sylvia Atondo- Public

Abraham- Public

Lori- Public via phone

Tom Acuna, CA OHV- absent

Ray Castillo, DAC Rep. - absent

**Welcome, Introductions, Agenda and Previous Meeting Minutes - Tom Zale**

- Meeting minutes approved. Nicole Gilles made the motion and Bob Ham seconded the motion.
- There was a discussion regarding the Flat-tailed Horned Lizard (FTHL) and the potential impact to recreation. A short briefing was provided to inform everyone about the multi-agency 1997 FTHL Rangelwide Management Strategy that mitigates impacts to the species. The BLM continues to implement the conservation agreement and management strategy for the Flat-tailed Horned Lizard.

**Public Comment for Items not on the Agenda**

- No public comment was received.

**BLM Report**

- The El Centro Field Office has gone through an office reorganization as part of the California Desert District reorganization. Recreation for the entire field office, as well as operations and maintenance is now one division. The administrative staff and GIS specialist will work from the El Centro Field Office but are assigned to the California

Desert District Office. Two jobs have been recently announced, one for an archeologist and another for a law enforcement supervisor.

- There was a discussion about special recreation permits and a question why individuals must apply six months in advance. Regulations state an applicant must apply a minimum of 180 days in advance of their proposed activity; however, the Field Manager can make adjustments to accommodate permittees. Following the California Strategic Framework, BLM strives to continue providing good service and make sure applicants get their permits approved.
- The BLM staff provided an Imperial Sand Dunes Recreation Area Update. (*See the update at the end of these meeting minutes*)
- Meeting dates for 2016 were recommended. The dates are:
  - March 17, 2016 with a focus on off-highway vehicle (OHV) grant applications
  - May 19, 2016
  - August 4, 2016
  - December 15, 2016
  - All meeting dates are on a Thursday at 9:30 a.m.
- A discussion was held regarding the new fee contract for the Imperial Sand Dunes permits. A new fee contract will be in place for the season with the same contractor as the previous season.
  - The BLM and contractor are currently testing new seasonal permit stickers to address the issues of permits getting wet. The style and colors will also change. Weekly permits will be the same scratch off style.
  - Permits will be ready for the Sand Sport Super Show and the contractor was still working on the vendor list.
  - Non-resident OHV permits will be sold at both ranger stations this year as part of the new contract.
  - A recommendation was made to the fee contractor to have a Twitter account because the previous contract still comes up when the American Sand Association (ASA) tweets about fees.
  - One day permit feasibility discussion - The BLM solicited bids on a one day permit program. The bids received indicated the one day permit option would not be cost effective. In order to offer one day permits, seasonal and weekly permit prices would have to increase to subsidize the one day permits. More detailed information about the number of bids received and the information the BLM received regarding the one day permit was requested. BLM must work with the contracting officer to determine what information is releasable and report back to the group. A request was recommended that the one day permit be offered to only local vendors to provide the local communities the benefit. There was a discussion that if it were made available, it should be made available to all.

- The BLM is not increasing fees this year and does not want to increase fees. The one day permit is not feasible right now and it is not cost effective for the BLM to offer this option this year based on the information the contractor provided.
- BLM updated the group on road maintenance/repaving. The engineering drawings are 95% complete and moving forward with a multi-year project and funding process. Ground work is planned for 2017, and surveyors have been to the Dunes and have some survey stakes out there now.

**Public Comment Regarding the BLM Report**

- None

**Subgroup Discussion**

- A discussion was held regarding modifications to a past ISDRA priority list. The BLM is looking to work with the subgroup on their priorities so tasks can be completed. The BLM would like to have a new facility at Cahuilla Ranger Station in the next two to three years. A request was made to have the past ISDRA priority list be added to the next meeting agenda or have as a reoccurring item on agendas.
- A request was made to continue to discuss camping on the east side of the railroad tracks, fees charged east of the railroad tracks, and what type of use is occurring there.
- The El Centro Field Office realty team was nominated for an “On-Location” filming award by the film commission and they were among the top three finalists.

**Public Comment Regarding the Subgroup Discussion**

- None

**Meeting adjourned at 11:47 P.M.**

## HIGHLIGHTS EL CENTRO FIELD OFFICE

### Desert Advisory Committee Imperial Sand Dunes Recreation Area Subgroup

August 6, 2015

**BLM Action: ISDRA Education and Outreach**

**Contact: Neil Hamada, Supervisory Outdoor Recreation Planner**

**Status:** BLM completed five on site outreach / education events in the dunes during the 2014/2015 visitation season. During the 2015/2016 season, BLM will continue the education efforts and schedule five or more OHV safety educational events. The events will be advertised on the BLM Facebook page again. Topics may include items such as, but not limited to, impaired driving, navigation, natural resource issues and OHV laws and regulations. BLM is also planning on attending the 17<sup>th</sup> Annual Sand Sports Super Show in September 2015.



ISDRA Booth at the 16<sup>th</sup> Annual Sand Sports Super Show

**BLM Action: Social Media**

**Contact: Michelle Puckett, Outdoor Recreation Planner**

**Status:** The Imperial Sand Dunes Facebook page continues to be a great tool for providing visitors with information about the Imperial Sand Dunes. Currently we have 6,284 likes and our posts reach thousands of people weekly. Most posts included information about current conditions, dunes safety, ISDRA Subgroup Meetings, OHV news, the historic Plank Road, photos and other dunes related information. We continue to highlight the Discover the Desert initiative through posting desert filming photos and news. Discover the Desert focuses on educating, engaging and informing people about what the desert has to offer. We continue working with the BLM National and California State Offices to provide Imperial Sand Dunes stories and highlights.

**BLM Action: OHV Grants**

**Contact: Neil Hamada, Supervisory Outdoor Recreation Planner**

**Status:** The Bureau of Land Management, El Centro Field Office, grant applications have been approved for ground operations, law enforcement, restoration and safety. The office acquired approximately \$1,000,000 by agreeing to a \$661,000 match. To review the Final OHV grants visit: <http://ohv.parks.ca.gov/> and click on the “Grants” tab.

**BLM Action: Maintenance**

**Contact: Neil Hamada, Supervisory Outdoor Recreation Planner**

**Status:** When the current Wash Road was constructed in an emergency situation, the Wash 10 restrooms were planned to be moved at a later date. The road was routed around the restrooms and a stop sign was placed at the intersection for pedestrian, traffic, and OHV safety. Since then, BLM witnessed several “close calls” as vehicles speed around the restrooms without yielding for safety. BLM requested project funding for the relocation several years ago and federal funding came through this fiscal year. During the week of May 18, the restrooms at Wash 10 were relocated to the west side of Wash Road to allow safer access for the public within ISDRA.



Wash 10 Restrooms before Relocation



Wash 10 Restrooms after Relocation



Wash 10 Restrooms being relocated

During the week of June 1, the maintenance staff prepared and constructed an ABA assessable parking pad in the Roadrunner Camp ground in ISDRA. Staff members are currently planning for the construction of an additional ABA assessable parking pad within the Gecko campground area for the week of August 10.



Construction of the ABA pad at Roadrunner Campground



Completed ABA pad in Roadrunner Campground

In mid-August, we will be reinforcing more sections of the wash road to prevent future damage caused by flash floods. Geo-webbing will be used to hold the road together during flash floods. This work will help the reduce damage to the road and the cost of maintaining it following the summer monsoon storms.



Flash Flood Damage on Wash Road



Installation of Geo-webbing

With the help of volunteer Alex Schlumpberger, the maintenance staff began clearing sand from Osborne Overlook. This work will continue through the summer on Gecko Road, camping pads along Gecko Road, Glamis Flats, Wash Road, and Grays Well Road. The removal of sand from the roadways and camping pads will occur over several weeks in preparation for the upcoming dune season. This work will allow ISDRA visitors safe access to recreation sites within ISDRA.



**Sand Removal at Osborne Overlook by Volunteer Alex Schlumpberger**

All the toilets were recently pumped and two seasonal maintenance workers will be funded to maintain the toilet during the visitor season.

During the first weeks of September the maintenance staff will be joined by seasonal employees who will be signing the critical habitat closure, and in general maintenance needs. These employees allow the El Centro Field Office to meet the needs of the public and accomplish their goals during the busy dune season. A plan is in place to begin a five week signing project prior to the beginning of the dunes season.



**Signing of the Critical Habitat Closure**

**BLM Action: Imperial Sand Dunes Recreation Area Fee Program Update**

**Contact: Neil Hamada, Supervisory Outdoor Recreation Planner**

**Status:** The fee season closed April 15 and no fees will be charged until October 1. Permit sales between October – April are about the same at the previous year. Pre-season permit sales will begin in September and a final 2014/2015 annual report will be produced near the end of the first quarter.

The fee management contract ended in April and a new contract is in place. The BLM is currently working with the contractor to prepare for the season and address items such as a

season permit that has a better ink to withstand longer periods of moisture. For weekly permits, the plan is continue with the scratch off style, hanging placard permit.

**BLM Action: Imperial Sand Dunes Recreation Area (ISDRA) Emergency Medical Services/Search and Rescue (EMS/SAR)**

**Contact: Brian Puckett, Park Ranger**

**Status:** Eight (8) seasonal park rangers will be joining the staff this season. They will all complete two months of intense training including a full Emergency Medical Technician course, off-road vehicle driving, radio communications, land navigation, technical rescue courses in wilderness search and rescue, low angle rope rescue, swiftwater rescue, and vehicle extrication. This will be in addition to the regular park ranger training including area rules and regulations, fee program, visitor safety, flora and fauna, cultural and geological aspects, and recreational opportunities in and around the area.

Ranger stations are scheduled to be opened Friday October 16 with all park ranger staff being operational at that time.

**BLM Action: Law Enforcement**

**Contact: Stephanie Clark, Chief Law Enforcement Ranger**

**Status:** Law Enforcement has had a busy summer working to get ready for the upcoming season. All of our OHV equipment has been put in for maintenance and we have begun outfitting new vehicles for service. Much of the equipment and maintenance is provided by the OHV grant from California State Parks.

Our Rangers are beginning to return from law enforcement details throughout the country. We are also anticipating some changes to our staffing in the upcoming months with some new hires in critical vacancies.

Two of our rangers attended a "heroes" demonstration at the El Centro Public Library for public service employees. They were invited to speak to primary school children to show them emergency services from a different view. This was a great opportunity to demonstrate to the children what great fun can be had in our sand dunes and the many ways we are there to keep them safe. Everyone had a great time listening to the rangers and playing on our OHVs.



We are also working with youth volunteers in the local area to introduce them to the BLM and mentoring them for the future. Forging relationships with our younger generations for the future is a BLM initiative we all feel strongly about and try to embrace at every opportunity.