

DAC ISDRA Sub-Group Meeting Minutes

May 25, 2011

Attendance:

Nicole Gilles
Chuck Hattaway
Dick Holliday
Glenn Montgomery
Larry Jowdy
Michele Ochs
Charla Teeters
Neil Hamada
Margaret Goodro
Brian Puckett
Michelle Puckett
Bob Mason via phone
Jim Bramham via phone

Meeting Minutes

Meeting began at 9:10

- Michele Ochs from Mesquite Landfill Update Presentation
 - A lot of work has been completed on the rail spur project
 - Storm water culverts have been installed and existing culverts have been reworked to support rail operations.
 - Under crossing for the desert tortoise were installed along the rail spur
 - Safety arms will be installed and functional at the three rail crossings once rail operations begin.
 - The rail yard and new rail spur system is currently being built. Construction will continue. Some 100ft tall lights have been installed in the rail yard and can be seen from Boardmanville. More lights will be installed for rail yard safety and security.
 - During busy weekends trash trucks have been approved for alternate routes
 - A fiber optics line was installed at the landfill

- Mr. Hamada gave an Imperial Sand Dunes update. Information is also included in the El Centro Field Office report.
 - Annual visitation this year is 1,054,491.
 - There were 54,803 permits sold so far this season.
 - Visitation is down approximately 9% when compared to the same time period last year.
 - Permit sales are down approximately 5% when compared to the same time period last year.
 - 346 medical aids this year
 - A survey was conducted to assess visitor satisfaction. Approximately 82% of Imperial Sand Dunes Recreation Area (ISDRA) visitors were satisfied overall with facilities services, and recreational opportunities.

- Dune Guard and Frisbees are a huge success. Kids and adults love them.
 - A huge reduction since 2001 in medical aids in ISDRA. Through education and enforcement of safety rules, BLM and partners continue to make ISDRA a safer place for outdoor family recreation.
 - Graphs show a 28% decrease in visitation since 2001.
 - Cahuilla and Buttercup Ranger Stations were closed for the season on May 21st.
 - Buttercup has a new camp host. His name is Homer Himes and he will be available throughout the summer.
 - All the camp hosts in the north dunes have gone home. There are currently four or five new applications for campground hosts. Will evaluate the applications and make selections for the next season. BLM would like to have more campground hosts in the north dunes in addition to Rusty Massey. Looking into campground hosts for Gecko and Roadrunner campgrounds. Also looking into campground hosts for Glamis Flats and Wash Road.
 - There were seven fatalities this season. Of those seven, four were OHV related fatalities and three were medical.
 - \$2.8 million was made this season and \$2.4 million was spent.
 - EMS/Visitor services were the most expensive, followed by law enforcement as the second most expensive. Non-commercial SRP's were third.
 - Approximately \$1.3 million worth of OHV grants have been submitted to CA State Parks OHMVR Division by the El Centro Field Office. For the first time, BLM is asking for a restoration grant to help fund the signing of the dunes closures.
 - Grant notices of intent to award will be announced on June 6th, 2011.
 - Off site permit sales have increased greatly. The goal was to have 80% of permit sold to be off-site within five years, Off-site permit sales are almost there with 75-80% of permits sold being off-site.
 - Brian Puckett has been hired as a Park Ranger and he is also a paramedic. He will be working on the medical program to help improve operations and provide advanced medical care.
 - The American Desert Foundation (ADF) trained almost 400 students in ATV safety through a grant with CA State Park, OHV Division and partnering with BLM.
 - We had 80 vendors this year. This down from the approximately the 200 vendors in years past.
 - The lottery is filled for the upcoming season for the Gecko Road vendor pad.
 - There were no differences in the ratio of season permits and daily permits sold this year compared to last year. 80% of permits sold are weekly permits and 20% are seasonal permits.
- Ms. Goodro reviews the Charter and the Bylaws
 - The Desert Advisory Council's (DAC) work plan gives the Desert Sub-Group (DSG) a set of items to focus on for meetings.
 - The DAC's next meeting is June 3rd-4th in Sand Diego and the focus is Recreation
 - DAC's September meeting will be in Ridgecrest and focuses on user fees
 - The November/December meeting will be focusing on the larger California Desert Landscape
 - These topics give a particular focus for the DSG.
 - The charter was signed last year by the Department of the Interior Secretary Salazar.

- The Designated Federal Officer (DFO) is the California Desert District (CDD) Manager. The current DFO is Teri Raml
 - The question was raised asking if the DFO can designate someone to represent them if the DFO is unable to attend a sub-group meeting.
- Mr. Bramham asked the question “What is the difference between a sub-group and a sub-committee?”
 - Mr. Holliday stated that a sub-committee is comprised of only DAC members. Whereas a sub-group can include members of the public.
- Questions were asked about meeting minute note dissemination. How were these notes being reviewed and disseminated? Is there a formal review process? Where are these notes posted? Are the minutes posted on the website?
 - Meeting notes were being taken during the meeting by a BLM employee. Mr. Hamada stated that the meeting notes were posted after they were reviewed by the DSG to the ISDRA webpage.
- Mr. Montgomery stated that the bylaws state the DFO must attend all meetings.
 - Ms. Goodro expressed that she has brought that up with the DFO and because of this concern the DFO will be attending the next meeting and this will be discussed.
- Special Recreation Permits (SRP) sub-group will be formed by the DAC.
 - There are five positions open.
 - Mr. Holliday informed the DSG that the sub-committee is in the process of selections. The application period has been closed and many individuals applied. Mr. Holliday’s hope is to have selections made by the next meeting. The focus of the group is not just about racing SRPs. It is to look at all organized events from weddings and filming to competition racing.
 - A concern was presented that the actions of the SRP sub-group can affect ISDRA in both a positive and negative manner.
 - Mr. Holliday expressed the purpose for the SRP sub-group is to look at ways to streamline operations for events to better the process and help the public and the BLM.
 - Mr. Montgomery asked the question “Is there going to be something that will allow local area representation to the district wide sub-group?”
 - Mr. Holliday answered “Yes, the meetings will be public knowledge and public input will be sought after.”
- The position that Ms. Gilles previously held on the DSG was the local community position.
 - Mr. Holliday asked if the position had been advertised.
 - Mr. Hamada will check with the CDD’s external affairs office on the status of the advertisement and stated that there are three additional positions that will be open soon (December 2011). Ms. Goodro recommended that all of the positions should be advertised together and use a variety of outreach outlets like social media. We can announce vacancies by press releases, BLM facebook, UDG, ASA, ISDRA web page, Imperial Valley Press, Yuma Sun, etc.
- DSG returns from lunch at 1230 and begins a group exercise. The notes and tables for the group exercise are attached.
- The next DSG meeting will be on August 16th, 2011 at 10:00 AM

Action Items for Margaret to pass along to DFO

1. ISDRA updates
 2. Explain scheduled projects for next fiscal year and updates on current projects. How are they funded and the progress of that funding?
 3. How can DSG help BLM?
 4. How does the DFO philosophically plan to get public input
 5. Review the mission of the DSG
 6. Process for the agenda
 7. Process for minutes and dissemination
 8. How is the BLM going to continue to meet their requirements for public participation?
 9. Will DSG be used like TRT as a two-way communication portal to the public? (ex: public comment periods during DSG meeting) and dissemination of information.
 10. Schedule a regular meeting date
 11. If the DFO cannot attend the DSG can there be delegation? If so, then how?
 12. Administrative support
 13. Request the open DSG position be posted/filled
- Meeting adjourned at 1520.