



United States Department of the Interior



BUREAU OF LAND MANAGEMENT

California State Office
2800 Cottage Way, Suite W1834
Sacramento, CA 95825
www.ca.blm.gov

Date: July 16, 2009
(Submitted June 22 15, 2009)

BLM California State Office Report to the California State OHV Commission

Program Update:

New Candidate for BLM National Director:

On June 9, President Obama nominated Bob Abbey, a veteran public land policy leader and chief architect of the Great Basin Restoration Initiative, as Director of the Bureau of Land Management.

“Through his decades of public service, Bob Abbey has shown again and again that he is the consummate professional natural land manager,” Interior Secretary Ken Salazar said. “His dedication to our country’s National System of Public Lands makes him an ideal choice to lead one of the most complex federal land managing agencies.”

During his long career in natural resources, Abbey has served as the BLM Nevada State Director; chairman of the Executive Committee for the Implementation of the Southern Nevada Public lands Management act; and most recently as a partner in a private consultant firm in Nevada.

Abby’s confirmation hearing is scheduled for mid July.

“Fast Track” initiatives for Solar Energy Development on Western Lands:

U.S. Department Interior Secretary Salazar and Senator Harry Reed (D Nevada) announced on 6/29 that BLM will work with western leaders to designate tracts of US public lands in the West as prime zones for utility-scale solar energy development in the west. This initiative will also include the funding of environmental studies, open new solar energy permitting offices, and speed reviews of industry proposals.

Under one of these initiatives, 24 tracts if BLM administered land located in six western states known as “solar energy study areas” would be fully evaluated for their environmental and resource suitability for large scale solar energy production. The objective is to provide landscape-scale planning and zoning for solar projects on BLN lands in the West, allowing a more efficient process

for permitting and siting responsible solar development. The areas selected would be available for projects capable of 10 or more megawatts of electricity for distribution to customers through the transmission grid system. Companies that propose projects on that scale in areas already approved for this type of development would be eligible for priority processing. The BLM may also decide to use alternative competitive or non-competitive procedures in processing new solar applications for these areas.

Across the west, BLM has received about 470 renewable energy project applications, including 1.8 million acres with a projected capacity to generate 97,000 megawatts of electricity (enough to power approximately 29% of America's households).

California Archeology Site Stewardship Program (CASSP)

The Society for California Archaeology has received a grant for \$2,500 from the Owens Valley Career Development Center (www.ovcdc.com) through WildPlaces (www.wildplaces.net) to develop additional training materials and to present a workshop to Native American high-school youth on archaeology and site stewardship. The workshop will be held at Kennedy Meadows, in the Sequoia National Forest, in early August.

This workshop is a pilot program for youth training in stewardship. This grant is a partial match to funds provided by State Parks OHMVR and to support provided by BLM California State Office and by the Society for California Archaeology.

El Centro Field Office.

The El Centro Field Office signed an Environmental Assessment on June 18 to allow permitted vehicle access in Devil's Canyon. The EA is available on line at the El Centro website: <http://www.blm.gov/ca/st/en/fo/elcentro.html>. Public Comments must be postmarked by July 17, 2009. Fax and Email comments are also accepted. Check the website for more details.

Imperial Sand Dunes Management Area (ISDRA) El Centro Field Office.

Union Pacific Railroad/Glamis Access Road

Union Pacific Railroad mainline tracks run along the eastern boundary of the Imperial Sand Dunes. The Railroad's access road, called Wash Road, has provided access -both to the tracks and to the camping areas east of the dunes for many years. This spring, Union Pacific announced that they were constructing a fence west of the road to keep sand off the rails, and to reduce the possibility of vehicle accidents on the busy tracks. The railroad plans to prohibit public access to wash road, and scheduled closure to the public on May 31.

BLM El Centro field Office negotiated with Union Pacific to allow access for the remainder of this year's field season, and smoothed access roads into important camping areas. The office staff has obtained funding to build a parallel access road, from Highway 78, approximately six miles south into the dunes. These will allow continuation of the traditional access, which accounts for approximately ¼ of the Dunes Visitors.

On 6/12, El Centro Field Manager Vicki Wood signed an Environmental Assessment and

I will try to keep you informed of new developments as they occur.

Other ISDRA related activities:

In April El Centro Field Office proposed an increased fee for ISDRA visitors. After a public meeting, BLM delayed implementation of new fees. For the 2009-2010 Field Season, ISDRA fees will remain at the same level as the last two previous years: Purchased Offsite: \$90 Annual Pass/\$ 25 Weekly Pass; Purchased Onsite \$ 120 Annual Pass/\$ 40 Weekly Pass.

In a related action, the El Centro Field Office has asked for a restructured ISDRA Technical Review Team. The new group will be ISDRA Subgroup of the California Desert District Resource Advisory Council (DAC). Applications are being reviewed, and appointments will be made by the DAC.

ISDRA information is available on the BLM El Centro's website at:
<http://www.blm.gov/ca/st/en/fo/elcentro/recreation/ohvs/isdra/sandnews.html>

Arcata Field Office

On May 29, BLM Arcata Field Office released Interim Final Rules for the South Spit Cooperative Management Area along Humboldt Bay. These rules were published in the Federal Register, and are available for comment until July 28, 2009, when they become final.

Additional information is available on the Arcata Field Office website:
<http://www.blm.gov/ca/st/en/fo/arcata.html>

Budget

American Recovery and Reinvestment Act (ARRA) of 2009

On Feb17, 2009, President Obama signed the ARRA. In addition to the regular federal appropriations through the normal budget, this legislation was designed to "jumpstart the economy" providing immediate funding to many agencies- local, county, state and federal- to accomplish priority projects in a very short timeframe. A website has been set up for public review of all ARRA projects nationally at: <http://www.recovery.gov/>

Funding will be available to all Department of the Interior (DOI) agencies including BLM. DOI has established a website for all projects at: <http://www.recovery.doi.gov/>. At the current time, potential projects have been submitted from each agency, and no information will be available until a final announcement is made.

The Recovery Act includes \$320 million for the Bureau of Land Management to expand its capacity to authorize renewable energy development on public lands while ensuring environmental protection of these areas, remediate abandoned mines, restore native plants and animals including sage grouse habitat. Funding is also included for Interior agencies to eliminate underbrush and other vegetation in fire-prone areas in order to reduce the threat and potential severity of fire.

Legislation

Interchange administrative jurisdiction of certain Federal Lands between US Forest Service and BLM (Chappie Shasta) (HR689):

Wally Herger R-Redding introduced legislation on 1/26 2009 to interchange parcels of land including the Chappie-Shasta OHV area to the BLM in exchange for several parcels of BLM land adjacent to the Shasta Trinity National Forest.

On 6/2/2009, this bill was passed/agreed to in the house. On 6/3/2009 it was referred to the Senate Committee on Energy and Natural Resources.

New/On-going Projects

Land Use Planning Update- Ongoing Plan Progress/Public Milestones

Hollister-CCMA Plan

The Hollister Field Office is in the process of preparing Resource Management Plan (RMP) with an associated Environmental Impact Statement (EIS) for the Clear Creek Management Area (CCMA). The CCMA RMP will replace the existing planning decisions for the approximately 63,000 acres of public land contained in the 1984 Hollister RMP and the associated CCMA RMP Amendments.

The Hollister RMP was updated in 2006 to establish goals, objectives, and management actions for BLM public lands that address current issues, knowledge, and conditions. However, the CCMA was not addressed in that document because of concerns expressed by the Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) and others regarding the potential for human health risks from exposure to naturally occurring asbestos in the area.

Since 2004, the EPA has been conducting an asbestos exposure evaluation study in the CCMA. The study is designed to provide further information on the exposure levels from various types of activities in the CCMA. Initial results from the EPA study indicated that an environmental impact statement would be necessary to consider the new information and a range of management options for the CCMA.

Accordingly, BLM agreed to work with EPA and the public to appropriately respond to the new information upon completion of the EPA human health risk study. If the information is significantly different than the EPA's previous 1992 risk assessment, BLM agreed to expeditiously initiate a National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA) review to consider the new information and potential management responses at the CCMA in light of any new findings. BLM and EPA agreed that this subsequent NEPA review would address general public access and recreation at the CCMA and analyze a full range of alternatives.

The plan will fulfill the needs and obligations set forth by the National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA), the Federal Land Policy and Management Act (FLPMA), and BLM management policies.

The BLM will work collaboratively with interested parties to identify the management decisions that are best suited to local, regional, and national needs and concerns.

Some of the major issues that will be addressed in this planning effort include: impacts to public safety and human health from naturally occurring asbestos and past mining activities; management of the San Benito Mountain Research Natural Area; resource management objectives and desired conditions; wildland and prescribed fire management, livestock grazing, motorized and non-motorized recreation management; lands available for disposal or of interest for acquisition; and potential for energy development.

The Draft EIS is undergoing final review- at the field office, state office, and Washington Office level, and should be available later this summer.

Bakersfield- Carrizo Plain

The Draft Resource Management Plan (RMP) for the Carrizo Plain National monument was released for public review in January 2009, and the review period closed on April 23, 2009. The Proposed

| Date | Action |
|-----------------------|----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| 4/12/2007 – 6/12/2007 | Scoping Period |
| 8/1/2007 | Tentative schedule for completion of scoping report. |
| 7/2007 – 12/2007 | Planning team develops alternatives. |
| 1/2008 – 12/2008 | Planning team analyzes impacts and develops Draft Resource Management Plan and Environmental Impact Statement. |
| 1/2009 – 4/2009 | Public comment period on Draft RMP/EIS. This will include public briefings and a written comment period. |
| 4/2009 – 8/2009 | Planning team analyzes comments and develops proposed RMP and Final EIS. |
| 8/2009 – 11/2009 | Proposed RMP/Final EIS published. Governor's consistency review and public protest period. |
| 10/2009 – 11/2010 | Protest resolution (if needed, Record of Decision signed, RMP implementation begins) |

Bakersfield RMP

The Resource Management Plan (RMP) is the comprehensive management outline for all activities over a large landscape- in this case all lands managed by the Bakersfield Field Office with the exception of the Carrizo Plain. The Current RMP is a revision of the Caliente Management Plan, which was signed in 1997.

At the present time, the planning team is working in impact analysis and development of the draft RMP. In Late February, the team held public workshops on travel management in Lake Isabella and Taft. In late April, they held socio-economic planning workshops in Bakersfield and Lake Isabella. The draft RMP should be available to the public in late 2009.

Project Timeline:

The following timeline has been estimated for revision of the Bakersfield Resource Management Plan and Environmental Impact Statement. All dates are tentative (except for the scoping period).

| Date | Action |
|------------------------|-----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| 3/4/2008 – 5/5/2008 | Scoping Period |
| 7/15/2008 | Tentative schedule for completion of scoping report. |
| 8/2008 – 10/2008 | Planning team develops alternatives. |
| 1/2009 - 4/2009 | Impact analysis and development of the Draft Resource Management Plan and Environmental Impact Statement. |
| 10/2009 - 12/2009 | Public comment period on Draft RMP/EIS. This will include public briefings and a written comment period. |
| 1/2010 - 8/2010 | Planning team analyzes comments and develops proposed RMP and Final EIS. |
| 9/2010 | Proposed RMP/Final EIS published. |
| 1/2011 | Record of Decision signed, RMP implementation begins |

El Centro- Imperial Sand Dunes Recreation Area (ISDRA), Recreation Management Plan (RAMP)

Imperial Sand Dunes Recreation Area Management Plan

Bureau of Land Management (BLM) began a revision of its Imperial Sand Dunes Recreation Area Management Plan (RAMP), based on a 2008 publication by the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service (FWS) of its final rule on critical habitat for the threatened Peirson's milk-vetch. The RAMP, approved in 2005, was set aside by a Federal Court order in 2006 and remanded to BLM for further action, as was the previous FWS critical habitat designation. The revision, started in 2008 is due to be released for public review as a draft, in early summer, 2009.

See the project website:

(<http://www.blm.gov/ca/st/en/fo/elcentro/recreation/ohvs/isdra/dunesinfo/docs/isdramp.print.html>)

Attachment 1- Palm Springs South Coast Field Office

Volunteers help BLM clean up in Berdoo Canyon

In celebration of Earth Day 2009, volunteers gathered to clean up Berdoo Canyon off of Dillion Road in Coachella. The volunteers included 15 guides and staff from Desert Adventures, a work crew from Burrtec Waste Management, three members of the Front Runners / Great Outdoors Hiking Club and several community volunteers. (text continues below)



Wanda Raschko, cultural resources specialist with BLM's Palm Springs / South Coast Field Office of the Bureau of Land Management first briefly trained the volunteers to leave "historic trash" left over from early Coachella Valley mining operations and water district projects. Then the crews got to work removing discarded tires, mattresses, bed springs, and other large items that had been illegally dumped, as well as picking up buckets full of broken glass, empty bottles and cans and shot gun shells. By the end of the clean-up, the volunteers had filled a 40-cubic-yard dumpster with trash that had been illegally dumped, and also gathered more than 100 tires.

Following the clean-up, volunteers were treated to pizza and pasta bowls that had been donated by local restaurants.

"This was such a rewarding day for us all" said Mitch Cazier of Desert Adventures. "Everyone worked hard and with such passion."

Raschow noted the people and organizations who pitched in:

- Burrtec Waste Management donated a 40 cubic yard dumpster and a hard-working crew.
- County Supervisor Roy Wilson waived the normal dump fees for the dumpster.
- Michael Salotti of All Pro Pizza and Carol Paul and Tom Nolen of Dominos Pizza donated food for lunch.
- Scott Connelley and volunteers from the Front Runners / Great Outdoors Hiking Club
- Jeff Gardner of Adventure Hummer Tours
- Community members Susanne Jarvian and Timothy Trutna showed up to help out and lend their support.

BLM-California [News.bytes, issue 387](#)