

## **DAC meeting, Riverside, held October 15, 2016**

### **Report by Lisbet Thoresen, October 27, 2016**

Public Lands Representative for San Diego Mineral & Gem Society, Inc. (SDMG)

Chair, Public Lands Advisory Committee (PLAC)—South, California Federation of Mineralogical Societies, Inc. (CFMS)

### **Attendees**

#### **DAC members present**

- Leslie Barrett
- Mark Algazy
- Randy Banis
- Bob Burke
- James Kenny
- Billy Mitchell
- Robert Robinson

Beth Ransel, the new CDD District Manager.

BLM Field Officers from the five desert field offices (FOs) were present, in addition to officers from other BLM offices (e.g., Sacramento) and other agencies.

BLM California State Director Jerome Perez was not present, but his article on the 40-year anniversary of the Federal Land Policy and Management Act (FLPMA) is included in the business meeting packet. FLPMA's long-standing mission is to balance multiple uses with "sustained yield" (stimulate development of economic opportunities that benefit local communities). Throughout the day-long meeting, comments from the public invoked FLPMA's mandate where potential conflicts were perceived to exist with DRECP, WEMO, Planning 2.0.

(Note: Joe Stout is Assoc. Dir.)

Few members of the public were present (the audience had ca. 35 attendees, including BLM and other agencies' staff). Approximately four Rockhound advocates were present.

**Agenda**, available online at: <https://goo.gl/Oh2EIO> (short url)

#### I. Introduction of Beth Ransel, new CDD District Manager

Ms. Ransel comes to California from Las Vegas. Her background is in policy and civil engineering-oriented projects. She announced that the DAC vacancies will be filled soon. The four vacancies include a position for Rockhound representative.

She announced the appointment of two new field managers (news release CDD 16-37 is included in the business meeting packet). Ashley Adams is leaving her post at the Yosemite National Park to become FM of the Santa Rosa and San Jacinto Mountains National Monument (SRSJMNM). Her She steps into the position vacated by retiring FM James Foote

in mid-October. Kyle Sullivan is coming from Colorado in mid-November to become FM of the newly created Mojave Trails National Monument (MTNM).

- II. Discussion of and corrections to last meeting minutes (May 21, 2016).
- III. Presentation of Field Office reports from Barstow, Needles, Ridgecrest, Palm Springs-South Coast, El Centro (reports are included in the business meeting packet, available online at: [http://www.blm.gov/ca/st/en/info/rac/dac/dacmeetings/May\\_20-21\\_2016.html](http://www.blm.gov/ca/st/en/info/rac/dac/dacmeetings/May_20-21_2016.html)).
- IV. DAC member reports.
  - a. Randy Banis, DAC Recreation representative and outgoing chairman of the Ridgecrest Roundtable.
    - i. Bob Woods (tortoises) is the incoming chairman.
    - ii. Advocated a “Yes” vote on Proposition 64, saying it would strike a blow on illegal cultivation of marijuana on public lands.
  - b. Mark Algazy drew attention to the fact that 95% of vulnerable lands are not yet listed in the National Register.
- V. Public comments on topics not on the agenda.
  - a. John Stewart, Blue Ribbon Coalition (BRC), requested scheduling of a presentation on “Planning 2.0 for Dummies” at a DAC meeting in the near future.
  - b. Gerry Hillier, Federal Lands consultant to San Bernardino County, reported that there will be a meeting of the tortoise management group in Las Vegas in December, when desert tortoise recovery will be discussed. He cited Senate and CA HR bills on roads and routes for which scope of administration should explicitly include Historic Route 66.
- VI. Presentation: DRECP – Next Steps, by Russell Scofield, BLM.
  - a. Scofield is re-locating from Sacramento to oversee implementation of DRECP. He is working on the first 100 days Plan (start date was signing date of ROD, Sept 14, 2016).
  - b. He is tasked with “meshing” Land Use Plan Amendment (LUPA) portion of DRECP with counties. He wants to reach out to special interest groups (stakeholders) to “create, coordinate, and implement synergies.” He cited: Recreation—OHV Roundtable and BRC; environmentalists; land trust groups; federal, state, and tribal agencies; and also outreach to renewable energy industries.
  - c. Disturbance Caps (DCs) figured prominently in discussions throughout the day, beginning with Scofield’s presentation. DCs will factor into permissible uses by different groups.
  - d. Steps in First 100 Days Plan: BLM will identify actionable items, then priorities, budget, and scoping.
  - e. From these preceding activities, a DRECP action plan will be developed.

Comments in response to Scofield’s presentation.

- f. Mark Algazy, DAC member. WEMO needs to be revisited wholesale in the aftermath of the DRECP. Algazy asked for Scofield's perception about WEMO in relation to DRECP.
- g. Billy Mitchell, DAC member representing Ranching and Grazing. Dismayed that Scofield overlooked mentioning ranchers among the Stakeholders in his presentation. Remarked that he is 14 years younger than the Taylor Grazing Act, and he is the fourth generation rancher in his family. He represents the last of the five ranching families who originally settled the Mojave Desert.

Mitchell said that the DRECP retired 2 million acres of grazing land, along with the income it generated to the counties and state. Mitchell was also chagrined that there was no mention of the leases which had been applied for between two and twelve years ago. They were not advertised and there has been no final decision rendered. Mitchell asked for the leases to be opened, and he wants to know how DRECP implementation will impact ranchers and leases. He remarked that Senator Feinstein et al had authored a bill which ensures accommodation of the ranching interests of two families; he wants the accommodation to include all five families. Mitchell also remarked that the DRECP appears to amend the Desert Area Conservation Plan.

- h. BLM Field Officer Katrina Symons, Barstow. Regarding WEMO, a baseline study on "Disturbance baseline" is scheduled to be completed by May-June 2017. There will be other intermediary studies/surveys ("products") between now and then. She recommended that the DAC revive the WEMO committee sub-group (it may never have been formally resolved).
- i. Randy Banis, DAC Recreation representative requested analysis of lands identified for possible exchange with the state and the impact of such land exchanges on WEMO. He wants them overlaid on WEMO map to resolve conflicts over routes that pass through different mixed use lands. Banis asked how Rockhound sites would be mitigated, given that they cannot be re-routed.*
- j. Lisbet Thoresen, SDMG and CFMS representative, welcomed Russell Scofield and thanked him for his presentation and for his intention to reach out to Stakeholders. Thoresen self-identified as representing a Stakeholder group – Rockhounds -- with 800 members in SDMG and 8500 affiliate club members belonging to CFMS. Thoresen noted that the importance of MTNM to Rockhounds is very high because within its footprint is a concentration of the largest number of collecting area in California, including some of the oldest areas for historical/ cultural value and among the very best for quality of material.*
- k. John Stewart, BRC, observed that Section 110 of FLPMA is not being applied by the BLM or in the DRECP.

VII. Presentation: BLM Special Recreation Permits (SRP) program review, by Sandra McGinnis, Branch Chief for Resources, California State Office, and Dorothy Morgan, Outdoor Recreation Planner, Washington Office.

- a. CDD SRP review was requested by BLM. Permits are issued according to specific but loosely defined criteria:
  - i. Commercial activity – defined as an event for which a fee is charged.
  - ii. Advertised event – includes announcements on public web pages (putting them behind a login exempts them).
  - iii. Group size.

- iv. If in doubt, contact the local BLM office.
  - b. Barstow and El Centro issue the most permits annually.
  - c. The study reviewed qualitative values: safety, public access, transparency, ease of use, flexibility.
  - d. Review of whether recreation benefits, experiences, and activities are being achieved through permits.
- VIII. Presentation: Review of Envisioning Sessions (Aug 30-Sept 1), by BLM Field Officer Mike Ahrens, Needles.
- a. Three public open house events were held in Barstow, Yucca Valley, and Needles to engage public comments on MTNM. An estimated 220 attendees came to the three events. *The first Envisioning Session in Barstow was the best-attended event, with at least 30 Rockhound advocates making an appearance and filling out questionnaires.*
  - b. A total of 85 questionnaires were filled out and submitted by the public, which was lower than expected. Ahrens called for public input suggesting ways to engage more public participation

Comments in response to Ahrens's Envisioning Sessions presentation.

- c. Robert Burke, DAC Bighorn Sheep representative, was incredulous that so few questionnaires were submitted. He asked to see them.
  - d. *Lisbet Thoresen, SDMG and CFMS representative, thanked Mr. Ahrens for sponsoring the Envisioning Sessions and inviting initial public comment on what MTNM means to them. Thoresen also expressed surprise that so few questionnaires were submitted, remarking that Ahrens had advised her about BLM having received plenty of responses from Rockhounds, so we need not encourage the Rockhound community to mail in more questionnaires after the Sessions concluded.*
- Responding to Ahrens call for suggestions to improve public engagement, Thoresen made comments and offered several suggestions:*
- I. *Make the questionnaire an interactive PDF with fields enabled to key in input (easier to read than handwritten entries).* (
  - II. *Enable users to save a copy of their PDF questionnaires and submit them online, in addition to e-mail or fax.*
  - III. *Make fewer freeform text input fields and include more checkboxes – it will be easier for BLM to assess statistical distribution of responses on specific topics. The responses could provide data also useful to the Federal Government's initiative (now ongoing) to quantify the recreation economy of the Park system and other public lands.*
- IX. Presentation: OHV use in the California Desert, by Randy Banis, DAC Recreation representative.
- X. Presentation: Mojave Trails National Monument Management Plan process, by BLM Field Officer Mike Ahrens, Needles.
- a. Ahrens provided a brief overview outlining the steps in the Management Process. He assured the audience that there would be many opportunities for the public to provide input.

Comments in response to Ahrens's MTNM presentation.

- b. John Stewart, BRC, voiced concern about losing access to Mojave Road where it passes through areas administered by multiple different agencies.
- c. *Dr. Nigel Hughes, geologist, UC Riverside and Ed ----, a representative of the Southern California Paleontological Society, asked for accommodation for educational collecting at the Marble Mountains Fossil Beds. Ahrens responded saying that new rules for collecting palaeontological materials are currently being drafted.*
- d. *Lisbet Thoresen, SDMG and CFMS representative, had several requests in the light of the large number of collecting areas for which Rockhounds are gathering locality data to include in a comment letter:*
  - i. *Make the comment period longer than the usual 45-60 days.*
  - ii. *Verify that BLM has route data already, so Rockhounds should not have to duplicate effort previously undertaken and provide route descriptions for each collecting area in their comment letters. Stephen Razo confirmed that BLM had route data and would integrate into its digital maps the locality data submitted by Rockhounds in their MTNM comment letters. Thoresen asked a follow-up question: "Are kmz files [digital file format used in GoogleEarth] an acceptable file attachment format?" Razo responded affirmatively.*
  - iii. *Thoresen explained what mindat.org is to the DAC and BLM to preface a request that BLM accept Mindat URL's with a locality titles/descriptors as valid and sufficiently complete reference on locality information in a comment letter. Razo confirmed that a list of sites with URLs appended to a comment letter would be acceptable, but added that the body of the letter should contain detailed information for several localities which exemplify the quality of information given in mindat.org.*
- e. *DAC member Mark Algazy referred to recreational Rockbounding as "Mining," which prompted Lisbet Thoresen to respond, saying that the term "Mining" should not be used interchangeably with Rockbounding or rock collecting, because the activities have different environmental impacts. Recreational activity should not be conflated with Mining, lest they are conflated together as being substantially the same, and therefore subject to the same proscriptions, regulatory constraints.*
- f. *DAC chairman Leslie Barrett made a remark supporting Thoresen's comments, saying that Rockbounding also has an educational value.*
- g. *Gerry Hillier, Federal Lands consultant to San Bernardino County, also spoke in support of Thoresen's comments, emphasizing that Roundbounding is an amateur activity which needs to be explicitly described and accommodated in the Management Plan lest Washington bureaucrats far removed from the Mojave Desert lump together Mining with recreational rockbounding -- to the detriment of Rockhounds. He also advocated including explicit accommodation of collecting invertebrate fossils to the Management Plan.*
- h. Randy Banis, DAC Recreation representative, made a motion to create a DRECP Sub-Group. The Sub-Group will "function in a manner similar to the former WEMO Sub-Group." The mission of the DAC Sub-Group is to assist BLM with DRECP implementation with solicitation of public input. The Sub-Group will be narrowly focused on DRECP implementation in the MTNM Management Plan.
- i. There was discussion about the difference between a DRECP Sub-Group and a DRECP Sub-Committee, which already exists. They are distinctly different entities whose activities and processes are different. The Sub-Group has public participants, the Sub-

Committee are members of the DAC and government agencies and their focus is on the full range implementation of DRECP.

j. The motion to create a DRECP Sub-Group was seconded and carried.

XI. Additional comments from DAC and the public.

a. Mark Algazy advocated having actual physical maps of the MTNM available for public review.

b. Gerry Hillier, Federal Lands consultant to San Bernardino County, criticized Planning 2.0 for diminishing the role of local counties to the level of Stakeholders. He exhorted the BLM to work in close coordination with the DAC, local governments, counties, agencies, and officials in drafting Management Plans under the Planning 2.0 initiative. He referenced his comment letter on Planning 2.0, specifically concerning the four “C’s.” He criticized BLM for tending to use the terms interchangeably, observing that they are separate and distinct and derive from Section 202 of FLPMA [is he referring to “collaboration and “coordination” between agencies?].