



U.S. Department of the Interior  
Bureau of Land Management

## Central California (CenCal) Resource Advisory Council (RAC) Meeting Minutes

Held at the Hampton Inn and Suites Woodland, CA  
Thursday, May 9, 2024, 8:30 a.m. – 4:00 p.m.

### ATTENDEES

**RAC:** Joe Ashley, Mary Boblet, Laurie Collom, Chris Friedel, Matt Kingsley, Michael Lueders, Reb Monaco, Nancy Muleady-Mecham, Andre Sanchez, and Bob Schneider.

**BLM:** Gordon Toevs, Acting State Director, Chris Heppe, District Manager; Philip Oviatt, District Public Affairs Officer; Sarah Mathews, District Program Manager; Gabe Garcia, Bakersfield Field Manager; Jeff Horn, Mother Lode Field Manager; Nick Lavrov, Ukiah Field Manager; Sherri Lisius, Bishop Field Manager; Ben Hoke, Central Coast Assistant Field Manager; Kay-Leigh Barnitz, Acting Berryessa Snow Mountain Monument Manager; Elizabeth Barry, BLM CA Ethics; and Sateur Ham, Ukiah Planning and Environmental Coordinator.

**FS:** Joel Miller, Sean Dent, Todd Harbin, Sam Snider, Joanna Wilson, Amanda Loye, Sarah Belcher, Michelle Christian, Kim Sovini, Laura Leidner, Elliot Nuss, and Beth Martinez.

**Public and Registered Attendees:** Camille Pon, Jora Fogg, Rose Winn, Sandra Schubert, Chad Roberts, Hekia Bodwitch, and Ryan Pistochini

### OPENING

#### Welcome and Introductions:

Chris Heppe opened the meeting at 8:30 a.m. with a welcome to all the RAC members in attendance. Matt Kingsley, joining virtually, indicated that he would not be able to attend the meeting due to a schedule conflict. He asked that a Vice-Chair be elected to serve in his place. He asked if anyone would like to be the Vice Chair. He then proposed that Laurie Collom be the Vice Chair. Joe Ashley made the motion to elect Laurie Collom as Vice Chair. Reb Monaco 2<sup>nd</sup> the motion, and it carried unanimously. Matt thanked the RAC for their understanding and apologized for not being able to be there.

Chris H then proceeded to with remarks. He thanked the RAC for attending and talked about why the RAC meets and how remarkable it was for the RAC to be meeting here at Berryessa Snow Mountain with the recent news of the Monument Proclamation Expansion. He highlighted the many steps forward that will be taking place with the recent announcement. Chris then turned things over to Laurie Collom to conduct the meeting going forward.

### GENERAL BUSINESS

RAC Vice Chair, Laurie Collom asked if anyone had questions about the RAC Meeting

Notes from the September 2023 RAC meeting. No one had questions. Michael Luders made a motion to accept the February 2023 RAC meeting notes as presented. Bob Schneider 2<sup>nd</sup> the motion and the motion passed unanimously.

Laurie then asked if anyone had questions about the RAC Meeting Notes from the September 2023 RAC Meeting. Bob Schnieder commended staff for providing a very concise explanation to his rec.gov question. Bob Schneider made a motion to accept the meeting notes from the September 2023 meeting. Michael Lueders 2<sup>nd</sup> the motion and the motion passed unanimously.

## **RAC BRIEFINGS**

### **Ukiah Presentation on Berryessa Snow Mountain National Monument:**

Ukiah FM Nick Lavrov began with comments on the co-stewardship agreement being finalized with the three Patwin Tribes at Berryessa. He highlighted that BLM and BIA were working with the Tribes on the agreement. He distinguished between co-stewardship and co-management. The monument is co-managed with the Forest Service and is the co-stewardship involves the Tribes. He then turned the presentation over to the Acting Monument Manager, Kay-Leigh Barnitz.

Kay-Leigh began her presentation with an overview of the project management areas that are encompassed within the Monument. She highlighted the areas covered by the Koi and Patwin agreements. She talked about the Koi Nation Agreement signed in September 2023 as a collection and stewardship of a Magnesite Mine within the Cache Creek Natural Area of BSMNM. In addition, she discussed the Patwin Tribe Agreement between three Tribes – Yocha Dehe, Kletsel Dehe, Cachil Dehe, and that ongoing negotiations were occurring through facilitation with BIA. Finally, she talked about a Monument- Wide Agreement with a potential for involvement of the 30+ Tribes. Once Monument Planning is officially kicked off BLM will engage any Tribe with a connection to the Monument. These Tribes would be "cooperators" on the plan and have early access to documents for review as well as more influence on development of a plan.

Kay-Leigh discussed the co-management between the BLM and the USDA Forest Service, Mendocino National Forest. She highlighted the Service First Agreement, the Inter-agency Monument Management Team that has been formed, the Inter-agency Inter-disciplinary Team in place, and the MOU between the BLM and the FS.

Kay-Leigh then highlighted the partnerships in place at the Monument. She highlighted Tuleyome's Cooperative Agreement – guided hikes, volunteer days and Monument tours and the Napa County Measure A Grant – Road Rehabilitation in the Knoxville Management Area to improve watershed function and health. She talked about the partnership with the UC Reserve System. She discussed the management of the Stebbins Cold Canyon Preserve which provides hiking access to the southern-most portion of the Monument, and the access and temporary housing options for interns and work crews through the UC McLaughlin Reserve. She also explained the partnership between the BLM and the California Department of Fish and Wildlife and the management of the Cache Creek Natural Area including the Judge Davis and Redbud Trailheads.

Kay-Leigh described how the Project Analysis Checklist is utilized on the Monument. She also highlighted all the completed projects thus far in the management process. She

highlighted the AIM – Assessment, Inventory, Monitoring: Annually inventory wetlands, riparian areas, and sensitive terrestrial habitats throughout the monument to better understand the baseline condition and change over time; the Seeds of Success: Collection of native seed for species conservation and restoration; the post fire rehab: 90% or more of the Monument has burned within the last 10 years. Most post-fire rehab is focused on suppression repair activities like rehabilitation of CalFire dozer lines; and the OHV Grants: Annually submit projects to the CA State OHV Grant Commission for ground operations and law enforcement. These grants allow BLM to hire seasonal employees, trail rehab and maintenance, and purchase tools and materials; the ACEC Protection involving illegal trail restoration along Walker Ridge Road. Installation of barriers, seeding, and erosion control measures; and fuels reduction efforts with sheep grazing on BLM to reduce fine fuels and yellow-starthistle as well as thinning, pruning, and piling operations on the Mendocino National Forest.

Kay-Leigh concluded her presentation with a look at the completed planning efforts that have been accomplished as well as anticipated next steps for the planning process at the Monument. To date, staff have completed or are working on: Comprehensive Class 1 Cultural Resource; Overview – 2018; USFS Management Baseline Report – 2019; Visual Resources Inventory - Spring 2022; Travel and Transportation Management Contract Summer 2022; Lands with Wilderness Characteristics Inventory –2023; Convening of Interagency Monument Management Team and Interdisciplinary Team - Fall 2023; and Ethnographic Placed Based Assessment – Ongoing. Looking forward, planning work will involve a MOU with USFS, a Statement of Work for Pre-Planning, and an Analysis of the Management Situation Report that will describe current resource conditions, the existing management situation, and management opportunities at the Monument. Staff will continue the collection of data and GIS information as well as continue to do extensive Public Outreach. District Project Manager Sarah Mathews highlighted that the Statement of Work will encompass all the project areas and will be in coordination between the BLM USDA Forest Service, and the Tribes.

### **RAC DISCUSSION and ACTION:**

Laurie Collom led a Q and A on the presentation with RAC members.

**Chris Friedel** asked Nick for a copy of the co-stewardship agreements. Nick said he would get them to him once they were all finalized.

**Andre Sanchez** stated that he was very happy to hear about the planning process. He asked how the BLM was going to staff the Monument. Nick stated that the decision on a permanent Monument Manger would be completed in about one month. Nick said he was also working with the FS on staffing efforts. **Andre S.** asked what fiscal year projects are being funded for at the Monument. Chris Heppe stated that the funds awarded are being utilized for this fiscal year.

**Reb Monaco** was very impressed with the field tour. He wants the RAC to be kept in the loop about how the BLM will be allocating funds at the Monument.

**Mary Boblet** wanted to know if there was going to be a website for the Monument or will they hire a contractor? Sarah Mathews stated that there will be a contractor selected and they will produce a Story Map that will be attached to the website.

**Nancy Muleady-Mecham** asked if Nick will sign the agreement or does that need to go to a higher authority? Nick stated that he will sign the agreement with engagement among all DOI. Nancy also cautioned against bringing the Condor back. She stated that there are many reasons not to bring back the species. Kay-Leigh stated that she would like to hear more from Nancy and encouraged her to reach out to the office. Bob Schneider stated that bringing back the

Condor was important to the Tribes. Laurie Collom encouraged staff to listen to Nancy as they proceed forward with the Condor re-introduction efforts. Andre Sanchez stated that there were other areas that were re-introducing the Condors successfully. Reb Monaco stated that it is very expensive to re-introduce the Condor. He agrees with Nancy that it should be carefully looked at.

**Bob Schnieder** asked how the BLM was going to engage the public over time with the planning process. He stated that the media outreach should be prepared now for when the agreement is signed. Philip Oviatt stated that the news release is already written and being finalized with the state office and HQ. He said the District and State of things in place to engage and inform the public as developments occur. Bob thanked Nick and Kay-Keigh for the tour and the presentation. He gave kudos to the BLM for all the work they do daily. **Michael Lueders** stated he really enjoyed the tour. He asked if current recreation activities would still be allowed on the Monument. Kay-Leigh stated yes. Michael asked if staff had reached out to groups to help with OHV trail development. Kay-Leigh stated she would welcome contacts for her to reach out to. Michael suggested starting with larger state groups and then narrow the focus down from there. Nick agreed to reach out to Michael to coordinate. **Joe Ashley** loved the tour and presentation. He agreed with Nancy that the Condors are unique but re-introducing them would be throwing money away when funds could be better used in the development of the Monument itself.

**Chris Friedel** asked how the management of the Monument will change. Kay-Leigh gave the example of vegetation management as something that could change by bringing it up to current standards. Chris Heppe stated that the BLM cannot be pre-decisional, but there are several areas that will be prioritized. **Chris F.** also asked about Seeds for Success programs happening at the Monument. Kay-Leigh explained the program at the Monument and what happens to the seeds after they are collected.

**Laurie Collom** asked for clarification on conflicts with the Forest Service regarding co-management. Nick stated that there are no conflicts with the Forest Service. **Laurie C.** then asked if money was the issue holding up the co-management effort. Nick said no. Chris Heppe stated that monies are given based on priorities. **Laurie C.** also asked what impact a potential expansion would have on the current lands and the current proclamation. Sarah Mathews stated that they utilize a checklist for organizing priorities for managing the entire monument. She said we do not know at this time how the two proclamations will be joined.

**Laurie Collom** opened the discussion to any members of the public.

**Sandra Schubert** asked about staffing efforts at the Monument. Nick said they will select the Monument Manager in June. They have active recruitments happening to fill open positions. He said they also use District staff to help with workload. Nick then explained the hiring process. Sandra thanked staffs for all the collaboration.

**Chad Roberts** stated that the BLM needs to be non-traditional in their approach to the planning effort.

**Hekia Bodwitch** suggested that using the Bears Ears Monument as a guide could be helpful in crafting documentation for monument management efforts. She asked when staff will do NEPA as part of the planning process. Sarah Mathews stated that the Statement of Work will include NEPA planning.

### **State Director Report:**

Acting BLM California State Director Gordon Toevs addressed the group via zoom. He echoed previous comments that the coordination between the BLM and the Forest Service is going well. He also commented that the additional funding for the Monument will be very helpful. He highlighted how wonderful it was to see Berryessa being in the spotlight. He also stated that the delay in getting budgets finalized has put a strain on the projects, but all efforts are being put

forth to work through those and move projects forward, and the funding influx will be a welcome addition to the Monument.

Gordon thanked the RAC for all their time and effort they put in and stated how much he and the BLM appreciate them. He gave an overview of the state office highlighting personnel changes. He stated that he was the Acting State Director, but they are working on selecting a permanent Director as soon as possible. He also highlighted the work being done by the State Leadership Team.

He talked about the Seeds for Success Program. He talked about native seed production and other work being done to battle climate change. He discussed the Inflation Reduction Act and Bipartisan Infrastructure Law funds being utilized within the district and particularly in the efforts to clean up abandoned wells in California. He highlighted statewide fuels treatment activities, efforts to collaborate with the Forest Service, and protection for communities in the wildland urban interface. He mentioned the Bi-State Sage Grouse program accomplishments in California and Nevada.

Gordon highlighted the finalization of the Public Land Rule and how it will be a positive benefit to the public and for land management going forward. He cautioned about ongoing rhetoric being put forth in opposition to the implantation of this new rule because the Public Land Rule is a key component for public land health.

Gordon also talked about the new Oil/Gas Rule that was finalized and he outlined changes in the process that had not been updated for 60 years. In addition, he talked about the Waste Prevention Rule and how it will help with flaring at natural gas wells.

He concluded with encouraging the RAC to take part in the upcoming Celebrate the Coast event on May 18 happening in Point Arena.

### **BLM Central California District and Field Office Updates Presentation:**

District Manager Chris Heppe provided an overview of BLM Central California District and thanked all the field offices for their dedication and resilient work they do each day. He mentioned fuels reduction work, programs and projects happening in the field offices, the increased funding made available to help with the efforts at Berryessa, and stressed how partnerships are essential to District success. He concluded his update with an overview of the acreage, number of employees, counties, Congressional districts, National Conservation Land Units, and field offices encompassed by the BLM Central California District.

Chris then gave an overview of the Central California District Fire Program. He highlighted the fire activities occurring in each field office as well as hiring and vacancies throughout the district. Chris concluded his overview with an update on the Kern Valley Interagency Hotshot Crew and the Folsom Lake Veterans Crew.

Bakersfield Field Manager Gabe Garcia briefed participants on the Case Mountain Forest Health Project, ongoing oil and gas projects/workload, and the progress on Oil Well Abandonments. He highlighted the wildflower season at Carrizo Plain National Monument. He also talked about ongoing work on the Keysville Activity Plan.

Bishop Field Manager Sherri Lisius highlighted the fuels projects, the Bi-State Sage Grouse Status and Conservation Plan, the Wild Horse EA for the Montgomery Pass horses in

collaboration with the Forest Service. She highlighted energy projects happening in Bishop and the Alabama Hills Management Plan Implementation.

Central Coast Assistant Field Manager Ben Hoke detailed some of his field office efforts including Thanking the RAC for their letter of support for the Cotoni-Coast Dairies EA as well as other updates on the Monument. He also highlighted work being completed at the Fort Ord National Monument and their noxious weeds abatement program and how road and trail work is ongoing. He also updated the breeding program in coordination with the Fresno Zoo of the blunt nosed leopard lizard and that a new Conservation Center will be opening soon at the zoo that will enhance the program that will see more lizards being released in the Panoche Plateau.

Mother Lode Field Manager Jeff Horn gave an overview of the field office including the 230,000 acres of the field office spanning 10 counties. He highlighted the two cooperative preserves found within the field office, the Cosumnes River Preserve and the Pine Hill Preserve. He described the 56 miles of National Wild and Scenic Rivers as well as major programs in recreation, forestry and watershed health, fire and fuels management, lands and minerals, wildlife, botany, and cultural programs that are ongoing within Mother Lode.

Ukiah Field Manager Nichola Lavrov detailed the status on projects, including Berryessa Snow Mountain National Monument Planning, South Cow Mountain OHV Implementation Plan, Clear Lake Fuel Break Project (2nd Phase), and the Garcia River Estuary Salmonid Habitat Enhancement project.

#### **RAC DISCUSSION ITEMS:**

**Laurie Collom** thanked staff for the presentation and all the updates. Laurie then asked each RAC member if they had comments or topics that they would like addressed by BLM staff at future RAC meetings.

**Philip Oviatt** led a discussion with the RAC members to set dates for the next three RAC meetings. After much discussion, it was decided that the next three meetings would be as follows: September 11/12, 2024, in Bishop, CA.; February 5, 2025, virtual meeting; May 7/8, 2025 in Bakersfield, CA. Laurie called for a motion. **Joe Ashley** made a motion to accept the proposed three meeting dates for the RAC. **Chris Friedel** seconded the motion. The motion passed unanimously.

**Andre Sanchez** would like to see a presentation on the ongoing efforts with the Sage Grouse.

**Mary Boblet** would like to see presentations on the oil and gas program, the geothermal program, and the North Fork land acquisition.

**Nancy Muleady-Mecham** would like a presentation on the wild horse gather being planned in Bishop and long-term planning involved with the management of the herd.

**Bob Schneider** would like a presentation on the field offices efforts with Tribal engagement.

**Michael Lueders** would like a presentation on private/public partnerships involving education and outreach.

**Joe Ashley** would like a presentation on the oil and gas program and partnerships occurring with that program.

**Chris Freidel** would like a presentation on BLM and the Good Neighbor Authority.

#### **Sierra National Forest Recreation Fee Proposal Presentation:**

**Jerseydale Campground and Kirch Flat Group Campground: Sierra NF Rec**

**Management Specialist Elliot Nuss** gave an overview of the Jerseydale and Kirch Flat

Campground Fee Proposals and the purpose of bringing the draft to the RAC for input. He highlighted that the increased fee would provide the Sierra with additional capacities to help maintain and improve the sites and provide for improved user experience and safety. He explained how there are currently no fees being charged for using these sites and discussed the process the FS went through to establish the new fee proposal. The proposal before the RAC is a \$20 single site fee and a \$5 extra vehicle fee for the Jerseydale Campground. The Kirch Flat Campground proposal is for a \$20 single site fee, a \$5 extra vehicle fee, and an \$8 rec.gov fee. It is proposed that the Kirch Flat Group Campground site be \$100 per night, a \$5 extra vehicle fee, and an \$8 rec.gov fee. He concluded his presentation with an outlook on how the funds would be utilized within the two campgrounds.

### **RAC DISCUSSION and ACTION:**

**Laurie Collom** led a Q and A on the presentation with RAC members.

**Andre Sanchez** said he was worried that the user data was not realistic.

**Mary Boblet** asked if FS LEOs were going to hand security. SNF Michelle Christian stated that security would be handled by FS LEO. In addition, these funds would go to provide for more rec techs to do public outreach at these sites. Mary stated she is in support of the fee increases.

**Michael Lueders** asked if fees include rec.gov fees. Elliot stated that the rec.gov fees are on top of the proposed \$20 and \$100 fees. He also stated that many sites will be held for walk up users. Michael feels a tiered approach is better to the proposed fee increase.

**Bob Schneider** asked if the sites were going to be concessionaire campgrounds or Forest Service managed campgrounds. Michelle stated that the sites were going to be serviced by the Forest Service and she went through the amenities at each facility. Bob also asked if FS had received any Great American Outdoor funds. Elliot stated that they did receive funds from the program. Those funds are being used in the area with hazard tree removal and bathroom damage repair.

**Bob Schneider** stated that he felt that the campground comparison was not realistic. FS WO Amanda Loye explained the analysis process and how comparisons are expanded depending on the area. FS WO Todd Harvin stated that many of the visitors to these sites come from the National Park.

**Nancy Muleady-Mecham** asked how many sites were opening at Kirch Flat. Elliot stated that 17 sites were available at that campground. Nancy stated she would support a tiered approach of \$10, \$15, and \$20 over three years.

**Laurie Collom** asked if concessionaires charged the same as the proposed FS fees. Elliot stated that concessionaires are charging \$26 a day plus parking and reservations fees so the FS fee is still cheaper.

The RAC discussion concluded, and Laurie Collom asked for any public comment. No public comment was brought forward.

**Laurie Collom** asked if someone would like to make a motion.

**Nancy Muleady-Mecham** made a motion to approve the proposal for the Jerseydale and Kirch Flat campgrounds using a tiered approach of \$10 in year one, \$15 in year two, and \$20 in year three. **Bob Schneider** seconded the motion. The motion failed 2 for and 7 against.

**Andre Sanchez** made a motion to approve the proposal for the Jerseydale and Kirch Flat campgrounds using a tiered approach of \$10 site fee, \$5 vehicle fee, \$8 rec.gov fee (Kirch Flat only) to begin in January 2025 and increase the site fee to \$20 in January 2026. **Mary**

**Boblet** seconded the motion. The motion passed with 6 in favor and 3 opposed.  
**Bob Schnieder** made a motion to approve the Kirch Flat Group site fee proposal as written. **Reb Monaco** seconded the motion. The motion passed unanimously.

**Tahoe National Forest Recreation Fee Proposal Presentation:**

**Tahoe National Forest Natural Resource Specialist Joel Miller** introduced an annual pass proposal to accompany the current fee schedule at four sites within the Tahoe NF. The proposal called for a \$40 annual pass, called the Tahoe Pass, to be utilized for use at the French Meadows Boat Ramp, McGuire Boat Ramp, Sugar Pine Boat Ramp, and the Manzanita Picnic Site. In addition, the RAC heard a proposal to bring the Grouse Ridge Lookout into service as a rental for \$75 a night plus an \$8 rec.gov fee. They would like to do a soft opening this year with the public calling the ranger office for reservations, then move to the rec.gov system the following year. He concluded his presentation by highlighting the amenities benefits that will be enhanced because of this proposal moving forward.

**RAC DISCUSSION and ACTION:**

Laurie Collom led a Q and A on the presentation with RAC members.

**Nancy Muleady-Mecham** asked how many days a year would the look-out be available for rent. Joel stated that the tower would be available for about 5 months during the year depending on weather.

**Reb Monaco** asked if they included hotels/motels in their comparison analysis. Amanda Loye stated that they did not because the amenities do not compare.

**Chris Friedel** recommended that signage would be needed to notify people when the tower was in use. Reb and Chris both echoed those concerns.

**Laurie Collom** asked if water was available. Joel was not sure if water was available at this time.

**Mary Boblet** asked if there would be an option to purchase the \$40 annual pass on the Tahoe's website. Joel stated that there would be a link if approved.

**Joe Ashley** stated he was very supportive and encouraged everyone to try out staying at a look out tower.

**Nancy Muleady-Mecham** said it was refreshing to see a proposal that really helps people.

**Bob Schneider** stated that he thinks the fees for the tower should be \$100 to \$125 dollars a night instead of the proposed \$75 a nite and utilizing funds form other campgrounds to maintain the tower. He feels campground funds must stay in the campgrounds.

The discussion ended and Laurie called for public comment. No comments were brought forward.

**Laurie Collom** asked for a motion.

**Reb Monaco** made a motion to approve the proposal as presented with the instruction to include security and signage features at the tower. **Nancy Muleady-Mecham** seconded the motion. The motion passed with 8 in favor and 1 abstain.

**PUBLIC COMMENT:**

Although no action can be taken on public comment. RAC members welcome input from the public for future consideration. No public comment was brought forward.

**NEXT MEETING**

Philip Oviatt stated he will begin work on the Federal Register Notice for the next meetings.



He will send out details for the Bishop meeting as soon as he is able.

**MEETING ADJOURNED**

Laurie Collom and Chris Heppie gave closing remarks, thanked everyone for attending, and adjourned the meeting at 4 p.m.