



Field Office, Fire and Fuel Reports DESERT ADVISORY COUNCIL

AUGUST 2024



Barstow Field Office (BAFO)



Photo: Desert Discover Center by Jesse Pluim, BLM

Archaeology and Cultural Resources

West Mojave Route Network Project 2015 Programmatic Agreement

BLM Action: The BLM continues to implement the 2015 Programmatic Agreement for the West Mojave Route Network Project.

Status: In FY2024, the BLM completed about 700 acres of Class III surveys along Western Mojave routes, hosted a virtual consulting parties meeting in March 2024, and prepared the FY2023 site records. The FY2024 site documentation and evaluation report is in progress.

Old Spanish National Historic Trail

BLM Action: The BLM nominated a segment of the Old Spanish National Historic Trail (OSNHT) known as Emigrant Pass for the National Register of Historic Places.

Partners: Old Spanish Trail Association

Status: The nomination has been reviewed. In FY2024, the BLM completed about 130 acres of Class III surveys along the OSNHT. Quarterly consultation with the Old Spanish Trail Association is ongoing.

Recreation

Desert Discovery Center

BLM Action: The BAFO initiated a phased development reopening plan for the Desert Discovery Center, incorporating targeted partnerships.

Status: The BAFO held preliminary meetings with key stakeholders and partners and solicited estimates and bids for facility maintenance.

Wildlife

Amargosa Vole Demographic and Disease Study, Habitat Enhancement and Population Augmentation Program

BLM Action: Since 2011, BAFO has been engaging with several partners to conduct studies and develop management strategies to prevent the extinction of the Amargosa vole and ultimately move the species towards recovery. The BLM continues to work with partners to achieve a down-listing of the species from endangered to threatened status.

Partners: California Department of Fish and Wildlife (CDFW), Inyo County Road Department, Purdue University, U.S. Geological Service, University of California (UC) Davis, University of California Berkeley and United States Fish and Wildlife Service

Status: The BAFO received funding to initiate a “mega-marsh” project with UC Davis to create a large marsh complex near “Borehole Marsh” to serve as a refugia/breeding site. Planning efforts are continuing for this multi-year project.

Amargosa River Monitoring Studies / Management Actions

BLM Action: The BAFO is involved in various monitoring studies / management actions associated with the Amargosa River including: Amargosa niterwort population monitoring, sensitive bird species spot mapping/Cowbird Management Program, tamarisk control efforts, SCAN monitoring, fish monitoring, hydrology studies including U.S. Geological Survey stream gauges, habitat restoration, endangered plant studies and spring studies.

Partners: Amargosa Conservancy, California Department of Fish and Wildlife, California Department of Transportation, The Nature Conservancy, Point Blue Conservation Science, National Fish and Wildlife Foundation, Natural Resources Conservation Service, Rancho Santa Ana Botanic Garden, Living Desert Zoo and Gardens, U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, and U.S. Geological Survey.

Status: The BAFO continues to implement tamarisk management on the Amargosa River. The BAFO is developing a burn plan to address a large stand of tamarisk not suitable for treatment through other means. The BAFO received \$30,000 to continue tamarisk removal efforts along the Amargosa River. In 2021, the BAFO established eight assessment, inventory and monitoring (AIM) study sites on the Amargosa River. In 2024, several of these sites will be re-sampled.

Afton Canyon Wildlife Habitat Enhancement Efforts

BLM Action: The BAFO is continuing a focused wildlife habitat enhancement program on the Afton Canyon portion of the Mojave Trails National Monument. The section of the Mojave River flowing through the Afton Canyon Area of Critical Environmental Concern (ACEC) is currently considered “eligible” under the National Wild and Scenic River Act and is managed to maintain the scenic, recreational, geologic, fish and wildlife, historic, and cultural outstanding and remarkable values on which this determination was based. The BAFO is collecting data to help develop the management plan for the Mojave Trails National Monument.

Partners: 3M Corporation, Amargosa Conservancy Point Blue, California Alliance for Tamarisk Biocontrol, California Department of Fish and Wildlife, California Institute of Technology, Living Desert Zoo and Gardens, Mojave Desert Land Trust, Oregon State University, Princeton University, Townson University, University of California, Santa Barbara, USGS, Department of the Navy at China Lake, University of California Davis, California State University, University of California Riverside, U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, Urban Nature Research Center, Natural History Museum of Los Angeles County, Mojave National Preserve.

Status: The BAFO partnered with the Living Desert Zoo and Gardens to conduct a bioblitz in Afton Canyon in April 2024. More than 40 participants contributed more than 660 hours of volunteer time and identified 522 species during this expedition.

Lands and Realty - Major Rights-of-Ways

Southern California Edison – Eldorado Pisgah Lugo Transmission Line

BLM Action: The BAFO received an application to upgrade two existing 220-kilovolt transmission lines across 176 miles of the Eldorado Pisgah Lugo line to meet transmission line safety and reliability requirements.

Partners: Southern California Edison

Status: A draft environmental assessment is expected to publish in Fall 2024.

El Centro Field Office (ECFO)



Photo: ECFO employee Gabriel Juarez staffs an outreach table and prepares food for a National Trails Day event at Kwaaymii Point along the Pacific Crest Trail.

Lands and Realty

Middle-Mile Projects

BLM Action: In July 2021, the Middle-Mile Broadband Initiative, a partnership among several entities, was signed into law. The initiative partners the BLM, California Department of Technology, and California Department of Transportation (Caltrans), who is supporting efforts to construct the middle-mile broadband network by installing physical fiber optic infrastructure needed to carry data at high speeds over long distances. The ECFO received two applications for the initiative and both projects fall within the Caltrans existing rights-of-way.

Partners: California Department of Technology, California Department of Transportation

Status: The ECFO is adjudicating the applications and has a project kick-off meeting in August 2024.

Minerals and Mining

Frink Pit Sand and Gravel Quarry Expansion

BLM Action: The ECFO received a project notification request from Superior Ready Mix for a 32-acre expansion of the Frink Pit sand and gravel quarry operational area near Niland, in Imperial County. The expansion would allow continued operations at the site, which supplies sand and gravel aggregates to construction projects in Imperial, Riverside, and San Diego counties. The expansion request requires NEPA analysis and a new mineral materials contract. The existing mining and reclamation plans would be updated to include the expansion area.

Status: The ECFO is reviewing the project request.

Dezan Abandoned Mine Land (AML) Remediation Project

BLM Action: The BLM's abandoned mine lands (AML) program focuses on public safety and wildlife protection by remediating abandoned mining features and will remediate features at the Dezan mining complex near Paymaster Landing. Remediation would consist of backfilling or installing wildlife-friendly gates and requires NEPA analysis for the project.

Status: The ECFO will complete biological surveys in coordination with Bat Conservation International.

Recreation

Visitor Services Unit/ Emergency Medical Services (EMS)

BLM Action: As of July 2024, Imperial Sand Dunes Recreation Area visitation has reached 962,836. During the FY2024 season, EMS staff responded to 278 emergency medical and rescue calls, a 16 percent increase in call volume from the previous year.

Partners: Imperial County Emergency Medical Services, American Medical Response ambulance, Reach Air, Mercy, El Centro Regional Medical Center, Pioneer Memorial Hospital, BLM Alaska Fire Service, BLM Law Enforcement Operational Medical Unit, El Centro and Yuma Sector Border Patrol, Homeland Security Investigators.

Status: Cahuilla and Buttercup Ranger Stations are closed for the season and will tentatively reopen October 18, 2024. Staff are preparing for the upcoming season and will start preseason EMS and rescue training and refreshers in September.

El Centro Field Office Business Plan

BLM Action: The ECFO is updating the Imperial Sand Dunes Recreation Area Business Plan, which is more than ten years old.

Partners: American Sand Association and various OHV recreation organizations

Status: The ECFO is drafting the business plan and will determine if changes are needed for individual recreation permit fee amounts and potentially implement a reservation system for certain developed campground areas.

Renewable Energy and Transmission

Perkins Renewable Energy Project (East Mesa Renewable Energy Project)

BLM Action: Intersect Power, LLC (IP) filed for a solar energy development right-of-way for a proposed 1,150-megawatt solar energy facility on public lands in southern Imperial County. The project includes arrays of solar photovoltaic panels and facilities and a battery energy storage system. The BLM executed a short-term right-of-way authorizing IP to complete geotechnical investigations of the proposed project site and install a meteorological station. Geotechnical investigations are complete, and IP is determining the need to install the station on public lands.

Partners: California Energy Commission (CEC)

Status: The BLM continues to coordinate with IP on cultural resource surveys and other pre-NEPA related data gathering. IP filed its application with the CEC in February 2024.

Geothermal Lease Sale

BLM Action: The ECFO received a request to review nominated parcels proposed for a geothermal competitive lease sale. The BLM will conduct an environmental analysis of 26 nominated parcels (about 43,662 acres) for potential geothermal leasing in Imperial County.

Status: The level of environmental review is being determined.

Wildlife and Biological Resources

BLM Action: The ECFO hired three wildlife interns through the Direct Hire Authority (DHA) program to work on flat-tailed horned lizard demography and occupancy surveys and a bat acoustic monitoring project.

Partners: Student Conservation Association, Department of Defense/ U.S. Navy, North American Bat Monitoring Program, Bat Conservation International, Interagency Coordinating Committee.

Status: Interns started in June 2024 and project work will start soon.

Wild Horse and Burro

BLM Action: The ECFO initiated a nuisance wild burro gather operation at the Picacho State Recreation Area with the BLM Ridgecrest Field Office. This is a continuation of efforts completed in September 2023.

Partners: Picacho State Recreation Area, Ocotillo Wells State Parks District

Status: About 50-60 wild burros are expected to be gathered through the bait and trap method.

Needles Field Office (NFO)



Photo: Giant nolina shade cattle in the Tecopa Pass Special Recreation Management Area

Lands and Realty

Renewable Energy Projects

The BLM has received multiple applications for renewable energy solar projects in lands managed by the Needles Field Office, with renewable energy transmission to include the BLM's Barstow and Las Vegas Field Offices.

The Salt Flats Energy Project

EDF Renewables Development Inc. proposes to construct a 1,000-megawatt solar facility with a 1,000 MW battery energy storage system on approximately 16,200 acres of public lands surrounded by the Mojave Trails National Monument.

The Mojave Trails Solar Project

Naturgy Candela Devco, LLC proposes to construct a 1,240-megawatt solar facility on 6,381 acres of public lands surrounded by the Mojave Trails National Monument. The Mojave Trails Solar Project shares a similar footprint to the Salt Flats Energy Project.

The Equinox Solar Project (formally Frontera Solar Project)

Boulevard Associates LLC proposes to construct a 500-megawatt solar facility on 623 acres of public lands.

The Serenity Solar Project (separated out from the Frontera Solar Project)

Boulevard Associates, LLC proposes to construct a 1,000-megawatt solar facility on about 3,647 acres of public lands managed by the Barstow and Needles Field Offices.

Status: As currently designed, the four proposed energy projects require a land use plan amendment to conform with the California Desert Conservation Act, as amended. The four proposed energy projects are on hold until the applicants redesign the projects to conform with the CDCA, as amended.

Middle-Mile Projects

BLM Action: In July 2021, the Middle-Mile Broadband Initiative, a partnership among several

entities, was signed into law. The initiative partners the BLM, California Department of Technology, and California Department of Transportation, who is supporting efforts to construct the middle-mile broadband network by installing physical fiber optic infrastructure needed to carry data at high speeds over long distances. The NFO received six applications for rights-of-way associated with the Middle-Mile Broadband Initiative.

Status: The NFO has reviewed the associated plans of development and submitted comments and update requests. Additional reviews will be conducted once Caltrans has submitted draft NEPA documents associated with the projects.

Master Operations and Maintenance and Consolidations (MOMAC)

BLM Action: The Master Operations and Maintenance and Consolidation Project is a program that will streamline the day-to-day interactions of the BLM and energy transmission utilities by implementing a standard operations and maintenance plan and consolidating right-of-way grants for existing facilities. On January 9, 2020, BLM California, Pacific Gas and Electric (PG&E), and Southern California Edison (SCE) entered into an agreement to initiate a pilot project to streamline standard right-of-way processes through possible consolidation of authorizations and implementing a standardized operation and maintenance plan. The BLM has received an application from SCE to consolidate all right-of-way grants in the NFO to implement the SCE right-of-way grants into the MOMAC program.

Status: The NFO is reviewing GIS data provided by SCE.

Minerals & Mining

Castle Mountain Mine Modification to Plan of Operations

BLM Action: The NFO received and reviewed a plan modification from Castle Mountain Mine to expand the mine operation. Castle Mountain Mine is an open pit gold mine in the Hart Mining District of San Bernardino County. The expansion of mining will occur on private and public lands within the existing Castle Mountain Mine Plan boundary. The operator has submitted a right-of-way application for a pipeline and powerline that would involve lands managed by the BLM Nevada Las Vegas Field Office.

Partners: National Park Service, San Bernardino County

Status: The BLM determined the revised plan modification is complete and requires an environmental impact statement. The BLM is working to publish a notice of intent.

Recreation

Amboy Crater Trails

BLM Action: The Amboy Crater trails project has five main components: motorized intrusion protection, trail development, signing, identification of future vault toilet at overflow parking, and granting a right-of-way. The project provides the public with a non-motorized/non-mechanized network of hiking trails,

directional signing, emergency gate, and bouldering to prevent vehicle intrusion off the parking area. The Amboy Crater trails project will be set in motion by the California Inland Empire Council Boy Scouts of American and Order of the Arrow Scout. The scouts will develop the first of five trails, located between the main parking lot and Route 66 for 2024 National Public Lands Day.

Partners: Sierra Club, Fort Mojave Indian Tribe

Status: The decision record and finding of no significant impact were signed. The scout's project is scheduled for December 2024.

East Mojave Heritage Trail: By-Way Signs

BLM Action: The NFO will install by-way signs on the East Mojave Heritage Trail. The NFO needs to complete NEPA documentation for the placement of 13 by-way signs and develop 13 interpretive panels depicting historic events within the Mojave Desert.

Partners: Mojave Desert Heritage and Cultural Association

Status: The NFO is working on completing and reviewing the signs.

National Monuments

Mojave Trails National Monument Planning process

BLM Action: The NFO is developing alternatives for the Mojave Trails National Monument Plan.

Partners: Numerous cooperating agencies, Tribes, and stakeholders have been identified.

Status: The Notice of Intent for the Mojave Trails National Monument Management planning process has been published and public scoping is complete. The BLM is working on drafting and developing alternatives.

Fire Emergency Stabilization and Rehabilitation

York Fire

BLM Action: In 2023, the York Fire burned about 80,000 acres of federal lands, 663 of which were in the NFO.

Status: The NFO is completing law enforcement patrols and beginning the environmental review process for signage installation and invasive plant control as part of the post-fire emergency stabilization and rehabilitation effort.

Palm Springs-South Coast Field Office (PSSCFO)



Photo: Mesa Wind Repower Project by Bob Wick

Renewable Energy and Transmission

The PSSCFO manages more than three dozen individual operational and proposed renewable energy development projects.

Crimson Solar Project

BLM Action: The BLM issued a right-of-way grant to Sonoran West Holding, LLC for the solar facility, battery energy storage system, substation, access roads, and an operations and maintenance building. The applicant applied to add a second gen-tie to the project west of the Colorado River Substation.

Partners: Sonoran West Holdings, LLC and Recurrent Energy, LLC

Status: The BLM is reviewing the second gen-tie application and issued a limited notice to proceed for geotechnical activities. Cultural and paleontological fieldwork is ongoing to refine pre-construction plans before construction is approved. The right-of-way holder completed construction of the battery energy storage system in October 2022.

Desert Quartzite Solar

BLM Action: An amended right-of-way for reduced footprint was issued in March 2022 and a phased notice to proceed was issued in January 2023. Construction began in February 2023 and is ongoing. Southern California Edison's application to build the dedicated 34.5kV line was approved.

Partner: EDF Renewables

Status: Authorization granted

Lycan Solar and Redonda Solar

BLM Action: The BLM conducted preliminary meetings and has approved fieldwork to collect resource data needed to develop preliminary engineering and plans required for public scoping.

Partner: EDF Renewables (Lycan) and Clearways (Redonda)

Status: Preliminary review

Mesa Wind

BLM Action: The Mesa Wind Repower completed construction and resumed commercial operations delivering energy to the grid in June 2024.

Partner: Brookfield Renewable

Status: Energized

Lands and Realty

U.S. Customs and Border Patrol Make Safe Project and Relocatable Towers

BLM Action: U.S. Customs and Border patrol applied for two right-of-way grants, one to complete construction activities along the international border and remediate disturbed areas previously waived from NEPA requirements, and to temporarily place autonomous surveillance towers, integrated surveillance towers, and emergency beacons at various locations along the border.

Partners: U.S. Customs and Border Patrol

Status: The BLM entered interagency agreements with U.S. Customs and Border Patrol and will schedule meetings to discuss the projects. The remediation project is on hold due to an injunction from the Texas District Court stating that funds may only be utilized to complete barrier constructions. U.S. Customs and Border Patrol is reviewing the proposed project and will update the application for barrier construction only. The BLM approved one high-priority relocatable tower in June 2024 and resource surveys for other sites are ongoing.

Natural Resources

Partnerships – Living Desert Zoo and Gardens

BLM Action: The PSSCFO partnered with local natural resource organizations on several proposed projects to benefit multiple species and their habitats. The Living Desert Zoo and Gardens will conduct a two-phase project starting with native plant seed collection for propagation and display purposes to support preservation and restoration efforts and visitor/scientific education. Phase two involves re-planting the propagated plants to improve degraded desert tortoise habitat and forage sites in the Orocopia Mountains.

Partners: The Living Desert Zoo and Gardens

Status: The BLM is reviewing and authorizing seed collection permits and work plans.

Partnerships - Youth

BLM Action: Through a five-year funded grant, the PSSCFO recently partnered with The Southern California Mountain Foundation – Urban Conservation Corp. (UCC) to support several proposed

projects for the benefit of multiple species, their habitats and local youth. UCC will support and conduct proposed habitat enhancement projects in multiple Areas of Critical Environmental Concern (ACEC), both the Sand to Snow and Santa Rosa & San Jacinto Mountains National Monuments, and critical habitats in western Riverside and San Diego counties. Experienced youth crews will receive general field and first-aid training and specific performance training to use hand and mechanized tools, like chainsaws, sprayers, brush clearers, and Global Positioning System (GPS) to capture, record and accurately report accomplishments. Youth crews will learn how to record survey data through data sheets and electronic collection devices for site evaluation and management purposes.

Partners: The Southern California Mountains Foundation – Urban Conservation Corp.

Status: The PSSCFO is in the first year of a five-year funded Grant Agreement (Oct. 2023-Oct. 2028). The BLM will continue to support the priority project planning and training process.

Recreation & Operations

BLM Action: In February, the Dos Palmas fire damaged several key components of infrastructure at the Dos Palmas Preserve including the potable water system that supports the residence and the operations building, the water distribution system for wildlife ponds, and a vehicle bridge. The three components will be reinstalled to their original state.

Status: The potable water system has been reinstalled and is back in service. The bridge is scheduled to be reinstalled in July 2024.

Ridgecrest Field Office (RFO)



Photo: Spangler Hills Off-highway Vehicle Area by BLM

Grazing

Cactus Flat Loading Trap Range Improvement Project

BLM Action: The RFO is preparing an environmental assessment to authorize a proposed range improvement project to help a permittee round up cattle at the end of his grazing season in the Lacey- Cactus- McCloud allotment.

Status: The RFO will complete scoping on the proposed project of a corral with a loading chute.

Lands and Realty - Major Rights-of-Ways

Indian Wells Valley Ground Water Authority Imported Water Pipeline

BLM Action: The RFO received two applications from Indian Wells Valley Groundwater Authority, one for 98 geotechnical boring locations for the proposed 24-inch buried water conveyance pipeline from California City to Ridgecrest and one for a buried pipeline and associated infrastructure. The pipeline would be 50.6 miles in length with 20.6 miles on public lands and 30 miles on private and state lands.

Partners: Indian Wells Valley Groundwater Authority employing contractor Provost & Prichard Engineering Group.

Status: The RFO is processing the buried pipeline right-of-way application and preparing an environmental assessment / environmental impact report. Scoping comments are being addressed and will result in a second alternative adding an additional 25 miles of existing water pipeline for eventual upgrade, which do not cross BLM-managed land. The geotechnical investigation right-of-way has been completed and the geotechnical study should be completed in August 2024. Monitors included both biological and cultural/Tribal monitors.

Southern California Edison – Control to Silver Peak Transmission Line

BLM Action: The RFO received an application to upgrade two existing 115-kilovolt transmission lines across 62 miles of the Control-Silver Peak line to meet transmission line safety and reliability requirements.

Partners: Southern California Edison

Status: The project is on pause while a NEPA contract is reissued and Southern California Edison reviews details for another alternative route.

Minerals and Mining

Exploratory Drilling by Mojave Precious Metals, LLC at Conglomerate Mesa

BLM Action: Mojave Precious Metals (MPM) submitted an amendment to their existing, approved plan of operations for mineral exploration which was approved in May 2018. The proposed plan modification requests exploration access via overland travel which would disturb up to 15 acres at up to 30 locations with a total of 120 boreholes. Prior to determining that an environmental impact statement (EIS) was necessary, the BLM had begun analysis of this project under an environmental assessment (EA).

Partners: Mojave Precious Metals, Inyo County, Death Valley National Park, U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service

Status: Surveys are nearing completion. A draft EIS for public comment is planned for release in the fall of 2024.

Exploratory Drilling by Gold Discovery Group LLC

BLM Action: The BLM approved a plan of operation for Gold Discovery Group, LLC to explore for placer gold in the area surrounding Johannesburg, Red Mountain, and Atolia. The approved activity includes allowing the operator to enter and gather samples of material from 32 unpatented placer mining claims, drive a drill rig along routes to those claims, drill 293 sample holes, refill and plug the same holes with the excess material, and rake tire tracks upon completion. The exploration holes are in an area designated as critical tortoise habitat where a biological monitor is required.

Partners: Gold Discovery Group, LLC

Status: The environmental assessment is complete and a finding of no significant impact and decisions record were signed in August 2023. To date, 71 holes have been drilled. Reclamation of drill sites and vehicle tracks are progressing. A biological monitor has been on-site for all equipment movement.

Recreation

American Conservation Experience Emerging Professionals in Conservation Members

BLM Action: Three American Conservation Experience Emerging Professionals in Conservation members completed their work assisting with off-highway vehicle recreation and restoration. The members monitored sensitive plant species and wildlife habitats adjacent to or in off-highway vehicle recreation sites, performed effectiveness monitoring on previous restoration sites, and planned work for future restoration crews.

Partners: American Conservation Experience

Great Basin Institute Restoration Technicians

BLM Action: Two Great Basin Institute restoration technicians have been working to perform off-highway vehicle trail maintenance, trail monitoring, sign installation, kiosk maintenance, and a variety of other off-highway vehicle recreation management work. Work to repair storm damaged roads from Hurricane Hilary is ongoing.

Partners: Great Basin Institute

Wild Horses and Burros

Ridgecrest Regional Wild Horse and Burro Corral

BLM Action: The Ridgecrest Regional Wild Horse and Burro Corral remains open to the public with adoptions on the first and third Fridays of each month.

Status: The corrals are at 1,000-animal capacity due to gathers in late 2023. The RFO is completing an emergency wild burro bait trapping operation in the Piute Mountains. The Palo Verde farms and Picacho State Recreation Area nuisance gathers have resumed. In April, the corrals hosted 90 kindergarteners who learned about gather operations and the adoption process.

Wildlife

South Oasis Windmill Russian Thistle Project

BLM Action: The RFO is working on a multi-year project to treat noxious weeds and restore rangelands to improve wildlife habitat quality and forage production for cattle in the South Oasis allotment. About 130 acres of Russian thistle dominate the landscape, and the goal of the project is to reduce the Russian thistle seed bank and restore native vegetation.

Partners: Lake Mead Inter-Regional Invasive Plant Management Team, NPS, Deep Springs College- Permittee of South Oasis allotment, Sierra Club

Status: A service trip with Sierra Club occurred in July 2024.

Remediated Mine Bat Detection Surveys

BLM Action: The RFO conducted surveys on the Black Dog, Marigold, and Val Verde closed mine sites to determine the utilization of native bat species. Mines were remediated in the 2010s -2020s

and retrofitted with closure devices such as metal gates and cupolas to protect the public from harm and bat species living in mine openings. The goal of the project was to assess how many bat species continued to live in closed mine openings.

Status: The BLM will continue to monitor remediated mine openings for bat presence. Additional surveys are scheduled for 2024.

Inyo California Towhee Joint Surveys

BLM Action: The RFO coordinated with Naval Air Weapons Station China Lake to survey for the federally listed Inyo California towhee across BLM and U.S. Navy lands. The survey efforts will contribute to the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service's data collection to reevaluate the Inyo California towhee's listing under the Endangered Species Act.

Partners: Naval Air Weapons Station China Lake, U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service

Status: All surveys have been completed for 2024. A final report detailing estimated population numbers across both U.S. Navy and BLM lands will be finalized by 2025.

California Desert Interagency Fire Program (CDIFP)



Photo: Stoddard 3 Fire by Tyler Reinholt, BLM

Fire Incidents

Fires as of July 8, 2024

BLM Action: There have been 48 fires on lands protected by the California Desert Interagency Fire Program (CDIFP) as of July 8, 2024. These fires burned approximately 2,800 acres of BLM-managed lands. The unit responded to an additional 123 fires that threatened but were stopped short of burning CDIFP protected lands.

Partners: The CDIFP has cooperative fire agreements with several counties and cities as well as other federal and State of California partners. Riverside County Fire, San Bernardino County Fire, Kern County Fire, Redlands City Fire Department, Apple Valley City Fire Department, Victorville City Fire Department, Palm Springs City Fire Department, Canyon Lake City Fire Department, the City of Highland, CAL FIRE, U.S. Forest Service, and Bureau of Indian Affairs.

Status: All the fires mentioned above are out except the McCain 4 and Lucerne fires.

Fuels Projects

BLM Action: Fuels treatments are planned and implemented to meet a variety of objectives ranging from community and infrastructure protection to habitat restoration and invasive plant management. Using methods such as hand, mechanical, chemical, and prescribed burning, the unit completes these treatments to protect lives, property, and natural/cultural resources. Fuels management also provides fire suppression personnel opportunities to control wildfires and protect infrastructure and private property.

Partners: Partners on the BLM and National Park Service (NPS) fuels treatments for 2024 include the California Conservation Corps, the Riverside County Habitat Conservation Agency (RCHCA), and the Ramona Band of Cahuilla Indians. The NPS is using the Ancestral Lands and California Conservation Corps as well as contractors to implement treatments to protect Joshua trees in areas modeled to be refugia in the face of a warming and drying climate. Other BLM partners include the San Bernardino Valley Water Conservation District (SBVWCD), California Department of Fish

and Wildlife, the California Department of Forestry and Fire Protection (CAL FIRE), The Wildlands Conservancy, Center for Natural Lands Management, Cleveland National Forest, Resource Conservation District of Greater San Diego County, Ramona Band of Cahuilla, Agua Caliente Band of Cahuilla Indians, and U.S. Customs and Border Protection.

Status: The CDIFP received funding to treat 10,444 acres in FY24. The unit has completed 8,276 acres of fuels treatments to date in FY24. In addition to community protection in wildland-urban interface (WUI) areas, Joshua tree refugia areas were treated to provide clearance for individual trees during potential fires. Prescribed fires were managed to restore habitat for Stephens' kangaroo rat in western Riverside County and marsh habitat for Yuma Ridgway's rail at the Dos Palmas Preserve. There were 51 treatments planned for FY24 but only 26 were funded. If fully funded, approximately 47,858 acres would have been treated in the California Desert District, Joshua Tree National Park, and Mojave National Preserve.

Mitigation and Education Projects

BLM Action: The BLM has 53 community assistance activities planned in FY24. Assistance activities help communities withstand the effects of wildfires and build resilience into the communities if a fire were to occur. Six mitigation-education activities have been completed in FY 2024. BLM staff worked with cooperators and communities to plan and implement local fuels treatments such as the Sunrise Community Fuel Break in Julian and the North Mountain Fuel Break near Poppet Flats south of Banning. Both treatments protected communities from wildfires including the Cedar Fire of 2003 and the Esperanza Fire of 2006. Ongoing maintenance occurs to ensure their effectiveness.

Partners: California Fire Safe Council (FSC), San Diego County FSC, Border Agencies Fire Council, and 28 of the community fire safe councils throughout the unit, U.S. Forest Service, CAL FIRE, and various local government agencies.

Status: The BLM conducted educational events and activities such as the Bart Hall Outdoor Show, the Last Chance Survival Simulation Workshop, the Los Angeles County Fair, Temecula Balloon and Wine Festival, and the San Bernardino County Fair. Camp Smokey at the California State Fair took place in the month of July. Two additional wildland-urban interface (WUI) workshops are planned for San Diego County along with Community Wildfire Protection Plan updates. Planning is underway for mitigation-education in Inyo and Mono counties and the Morongo Basin with Joshua Tree National Park.

Hiring Updates

Workforce Transformation

BLM Action: BLM Firefighter positions filled from the December job fair in Riverside are trained and have been responding to numerous fires.