

*Desert Advisory Council Meeting
December 7, 2024*

*CONFIDENTIAL ROUGHLY EDITED REALTIME FILE
Compliments of Birnbaum Interpreting Services*

This file was created in real time by a Realtime Captioner. Communication Access Realtime Translation (CART) is provided in order to facilitate communication accessibility and may not be a totally verbatim record of the proceedings. A consumer should check with the presenter for any clarification of the presentation.

- >> Virtual, audience, thanks for joining. We're going to get started here in a couple of minutes.
- >> Hey, everybody. It's 9:00 o'clock.
- >> Recording in progress.
- >> SHELLY LYNCH: We've got a packed agenda today. We're going to get the meeting started. I'll call the meeting to order. I'm not sure where the bathrooms are, Michelle. Are there some out here in the lobby?
- >> KATE MIYAMOTO: By the elevator.
- >>LYNCH: If there's a fire or emergency and we need to exit quickly, we go through that door and all the front doors. All right. We'll take breaks as necessary. First, I'd like to welcome our newest staff member, Mr. Creed Stone. I think you met him yesterday. [APPLAUSE].
And then I'd like to welcome Mr. Joe Stout who is not here. [Laughter]. Yet with us. So he'll share some remarks with us here in a little bit. So, if you can get a quick overview for Zoom prototypes for the public and housekeeping for the virtual.
- >> MIYAMOTO: This is for the 9:30 comments. Member of the public, you're invited to observe but not comment or ask questions during this meeting. So the meeting will be recorded. And we have a captioner. Please state your name before making your comment. And you'll have three minutes for the comment period. Back to you, Shelly.
- >>LYNCH: Okay. So, we'll do BLM introductions first. We'll start with Brandon.
- >> Brandon Anderson. BLM--
- >> And Sabrina?
- >> Sabrina Bice.
- >> Welcome. I think this is your first, right?
- >> Yes, it is.

>> Welcome. Mike carpenter.

>> Mike carpenter.

>> Sarah Denos.

>> California state office, public affairs.

>> Phil?

>> Phil DeSenze, Ridgecrest Field Manager. First DAC meeting. Glad to be here.

>> Paul?

>> Paul Gibbs.

>> Julia. Public Affairs Specialist, California desert district.

>> Marc Stamer, Barstow Field Manager.

>> Alex? Alex Schlumpberger.

>> And Michelle?

>>Michelle Van Der Linden, public affairs.

>> Good morning, everyone.

>> Did I miss anybody?

>> Matt Lohr, El Centro Field Manager.

>> LYNCH: All right. Is there anybody else? Okay. So we can have a Forest Service folks with us. If you guys want to introduce yourself.

>> I'm Justin Seastrand, Forest Service-- here at the Angeles field office our headquarters is in Arcadia, California.

>> Jeremy Sugden. I'm the recreation Program Manager or the Angeles National Forest.

>> Do we have anybody online from the Forest Service?

>> I don't see anyone.

>> LYNCH: Okay. Okay. So I will turn the meeting over to Hans to introduce the members.

>> HANS HAAS: Hello, everybody. Wish I could be there in person with you, although it looks like you guys might be out of room in that meeting space there.

My name is Hans Haas, I'm the Chair of, I represent dispersed recreation. We're going to go around the table and have each staff member talk about what they're here for and give a one-to-two-minute update. Let's start with Mr. Randy Banis.

>> RANDY BANIS: Good morning. Hi, Hans. Randy Banis. Representing the public-at-large. President of friends-- and friends of mirage. This is the BLM fire and fuel and Ridgecrest and highway recreation. We have yin and Yang program. We have on one hand program to keep people on the designated trails by signing and maintaining and mapping the routes. On the other hand we have an equally vibrant restoration project to make the undesignated routes go away. Those two work hand in hand well. And we appreciate the support of the two field offices.

One thing I do want to say, I'm sorry to take a second. I want to tell Shelly and Joe, how wonderful we feel about the field office and the work we have out there. The place is completely turned around. Extremely high quality. The people he brought him behind him is really top-notch, they're working together wonderful. We worked on a list of to-dos that seemed insurmountable at one time. Now we're getting to little things. When you get to those kinds of things, we know that we worked through the hard stuff. And I just have to recognize that. It's really proud to be able to say thank you for all your help over there. and I expect great things from Phil, too.

>> Give him some time.

>> LYNCH: He's a good hire, too.

>> BANIS: I think so. We enjoy getting to know each other. Thanks, everybody for indulging me.

>>HAAS: Thank you, Randy. Next, how about Nathan Francis.

>> Nathan Francis, I represent DAC for energy development. I'm with U.S. Borax-- (away from mic). We talked about yesterday.

>> All right. Thank you, Nathan.

>> HAAS: Next, Desirea Haggard, who's not online. I believe she represented mineral and mining interest. So let's keep going down the list and hear from Jennifer Henning.

>> JENNIFER HENNING: Good morning, I'm Jennifer Henning I represented dispersed recreation interest. I'm a resident of the Joshua tree basin. And also enthusiast.

>> Thank you, Jenn. How Mr. Dick Holliday?

>> DICK HOLLIDAY: My name is Dick Holliday. Representing dispersed recreation. Primarily recreated the Imperial Sand Dunes. And we have been going on there for 57 years. Gone through a lot of people. I hope we have some really good people now.

>> All right. Thank you. And next joining me in cyberspace, Ann Kulikoff.

>> ANN KULIKOFF: Good morning, everyone. So I represent the public get large. And I'm sorry I couldn't be there in person. But I'm looking forward to the agenda today. And I have no updates today.

>> All right. Thank you, Ann. Next, we have Joshua Martelli.

>> JOSHUA MARTELLI: Good morning, everybody. Joshua Martelli representing commercial recreation. My brother and I have been race promoters for the past 15 years and currently operate, with multiple races in the state of Nevada, California, and Arizona. So it's my pleasure to be in the DAC and learn a ton. Looking forward to get to know everybody better and learning the interest of all the stakeholders here.

>> All right. Thank you, Josh. Sorry I'm not there to meet you in person. Definitely next time. Next, how about Terry McGlynn.

>> TERRY MCGLYNN: I'm an ecologist with the California State University. And I have served recently as the Director the Desert center. I want to mention, since I happen to be from the Foothills. The Angeles National Forest, that's where I grew up backpacking and-- I live in Pasadena. I feel people, members of DAC want to know the perspective and I can provide that. I'm glad to be with you all here today.

>> All right. That's fantastic, Terry. Thank you. Next, Steven Reyes.

>> STEVEN REYES: Good morning, everyone. My name is Steven Reyes. I represent archaeology and historic interest. Some of my interest is railroad settlements along the railroads that run through the Mojave monument. And the grave wards at those settlements that people have long forgotten. So thank you.

>> All right. Thank you, Steven. Is Mr. Bob Robinson with us today?

>> BOB ROBINSON: I represent Tribal interests (away from mic). Activities of BLM, we work pretty much continuously to influence those and-- point much view and make sure that-- (away from mic) make sure that the actions taken are good for the whatever the group is that's doing whatever they want to do. And also not affecting negatively to the tribes. And it's pretty much an ongoing activity.

>> All right. Thank you, Bob. And next, DAC member, Dawn Rowe.

>>DAWN ROWE: Dawn with the county of San Bernardino. I tell people I touch, Arizona, Nevada and LA County. I have Desert mountains and the valley floor. All of us in in this room -- any of those things, to do with the county and work with our residents on that.

>> All right. Thank you, Dawn. And now, Creed Stone.

>> CREED STONE: Hello, everybody. Creed Stone, federal grazing permits and leases. I'm a sixth-generation cow producer in San Bernardino County. This is my first time here. So I'm glad to be here. I hope I can work well with everybody. And have a good discussion with our interest in BLM.

>> All right. Thank you, Creed. And now, Mr. Ed Stovin.

>>ED STOVIN: Thank you. I'm president of the San Diego off road coalition and president of-- long time Director California vehicle association. I represent off road vehicle users and concerned about the monument proposals and protecting the interest of road users. I look at the Desert-- right now there's a plan, a proposed conservation plan for the tortoise. I want to thank

Marc and his people for the tour yesterday. It was informative and interesting. The right amount of driving to talk to the BLM staff without dragging us too far. But it's interesting to learn about things like this bull that only lives in this tiny place and all the good work being done to protect it. And of course, the management problems in a place of Dumont Dunes where you go from nobody to a small city and everybody clears out again. It's the same with the Imperial Sand Dunes. It's a big management problem. My hats off to you and all of you for managing places like that. That's monumental. Thank you.

>> All right. Thanks, Ed. And then last but not least joining me in the virtual world Mr. Jack Thompson.

>>JACK THOMPSON: Hey, everybody. Yes, sorry I can't be with you all. My name is Jack Thompson representing conservation organizations. I'm a land manager with the wildland conservancy. I manage land for conservation and public access within the boundaries of the Desert district for the past 17 years. Have had a lot of work with BLM as most of the preserves in this, in that region are bordering public lands and BLM land. I don't have any significant updates. Just working through challenges with our great BLM partners and happy to be here and happy to get to know the new members. Thank you, all.

>> HAAS: Thank you. Jack. Thank you, all DAC members. And I'll turn it back to you, Shelly.

>> LYNCH: All right. So I'd like to introduce, Joe Stout, our State Director. Served seven years as the California office associate State Director and brings 25 years of experience to natural resources and conservation. Previously being here he's familiar with California and California's challenges. He's been with the BLM since 2001 and-- at the state and headquarters level. We're thankful you can join us. With that I'll hand it to you.

>>JOE STOUT: Thanks, Shelly. And thanks, everyone. I know I'm on a clock here. I'll see if I can follow directions.

But again, it was great to get to see everyone and meet some of the new DAC members and get on the ground with the tour yesterday. I want to thank Barstow. I go to the DAC meeting, the best part is the tour and have conversations. We had lots with folks yesterday. Not that we don't love being in a conference room like this. There's business to take care of. You're going to do that and appreciate that time.

But also, just want to point out, it's great to see all the field managers here in the Desert District. It shows the commitment of the BLM CDD that they're all here, present, engaged even if it's not in their field office per se. And so again, really appreciate them all being here. And obviously for Kate running the show. Thanks for coordinating all this and doing a great job.

So maybe to start off saying, personally it's great to see the Desert Advisory Council in action. Live with the quorum. When I left a couple of years ago, we didn't have a lot of functioning DAC, RACs across the state. So, it is great to see you all here engaged. We really value the commitment and your service.

And expertise that you bring to the table here. It's just kind of in the conversations I had yesterday, getting some of the backgrounds that you all have, a lot of experience, knowledge you bring to the table and like we are better as a bureau when we are, we have functioning Advisory Councils and we can rely on that expertise and recommendations you bring to the table.

So I'd say we're in a better place with you. I want to extend my gratitude for your commitment to this committee and commitment to help with the agency. I just want to share that.

Shelly mentioned a little bit about my background. I'm not going to get into that. I took a detour with the Forest Service for the previous service, as Eldorado supervisor. I'm excited for this opportunity to come back and be here. I won't go into it anymore. Excited to be here.

In the State Director role, I want to-- an honor to serve in this role in California. I have a lot of folks I've been following in the footsteps in this role specifically. I want to acknowledge Ed Hastey-- a lot of you worked with over the years and was the State Director in California for 22 years. I said no way I'm going to come close to that. But thinking about those 22 years in a row. And he did amazing things when he was there.

I worked with Ed when I was the Associate State Director. I got to know him well. In his retirement age, and he passed in 2020. And it was two weeks before he passed he was still calling me up and concerned about this route in the Desert. Randy probably knows something. He was concerned about routing and how we're going to get together. I mean, so it just-- I admired his tireless commitment to public lands. He brought a great sense of humor to the table which I admired. He did a number of things for BLM. He was a big proponent and established our law enforcement program in the Desert District in 1978. And that program has grown to what it is today.

He also played a big role in bringing recreation and conservation, kind of to the forefront of BLM in the agency. And so I'd-- he was problem solving role. Roll up his sleeves and listen to anyone who wants to come talk and figure stuff out. I hope to build on his legacy. I want to acknowledge Ed. I like to do that when I get around. He got to share a lot in his later years and did a lot for us.

So next thing I'll talk about is the transition. So in DOI, President elect Trump nominated Doug Burgum - the North Dakota Governor to be the next Secretary of Interior. We'll hear confirmation hearings after that. We expect it to go quickly as far as getting any secretary confirmed. We don't know yet as far as some of the other nominees in the department, as far as our Assistant Secretary and the Director the agency. We don't know who some of the transition team members are that are going to be joining, we should know as soon as next week who those folks are. They're going to start announcing those.

One of the benefits we have here, I have personally in California, I serve as the acting State Director for a year during the previous Trump administration. I got to know the folks well and some of the same ones are coming back to help out during the transition. We have pre-existing relationships. I'm confident we are going to be able to align priorities and shifts that will happen within the Department of Interior and we're working, are ready on trying to prepare for some of

the different direction we're going to see on the ground. So but just wanted to share that and looking forward to working with the new team coming in.

And then lastly transition, too, our current Director is going to be leaving the agency here in a few weeks. And she's accepted a position as the head of The Wilderness Society -- she's going to be the President or CEO of that. She'll leave us in a few weeks. And new folks will be coming in. Looking forward to working with them.

And then just shared across big picture California, BLM. Our budget. So last year our operating budget was a little under \$400 million, that includes all the different-- mineral lands and resources accounts that we get appropriated from Congress as well as our fire and fuels funding. A lot of our cost recovery dollars, all resources that come in.

And so as we move into kind of a new fiscal year, continued resolution up until right before the holidays, we're confident we're going to see our budget pass, FY25. We're not anticipating any disruptions in funding and government operations. I know when it does happen, it can impact a lot of activities whether the season we have in the Desert. The races and the big permits we have, and so we're educate to making sure, I think everyone's interested in keeping things moving forward. And start-- if it does look like something's going to happen, we start plan B and how to keep the movement. Know, you might see noise and what not. We're confident that things are going to keep moving forward on that. And just to share a little bit.

Statewide priorities. When we have the new administration coming in, we'll see shifts within the priorities. The larger, four major areas, it's our energy and minerals programs. So you're going to see an increase in some of the oil and gas activity and some planning and analysis that happen here in the state. That might be in central Cal. Obviously renewal energy program, geothermal, solar are going to continue primarily in the Desert. Geothermal we have activity throughout the state and up north. So that is going to continue.

Another major priority is recreation. And so we don't anticipate obviously our focus, BLM California recreation is huge. It's going to continue to be. We're looking at how we can expand public access and kind of reinvest in our infrastructure, our recreation infrastructure that we have brought to the state. We're focused on trying to get a new ranger station down in Imperial Sand Dunes. You'll hear about some of that, when Matt and his folks talk about the fees.

This DAC plays a critical role in looking at new fees and increasing fees throughout the state to try to help again so we can reinvest in some of the infrastructure on the ground. We're excited to have the opportunity at least to present some of these recommendations to you all.

And then we have the Foundation for America's Public Lands, new foundation where we can go after philanthropic dollars, private funding, to supplement some of the work we do. We've been looking at partnerships with the Foundation. A lot of it focused around infrastructure and recreation access and trail work and as well as our restoration opportunities. And so it's another opportunity to really bring so additional resources, to enhance some of the recreational opportunities we provide for the public. That's an area where we're focusing on.

Our wildfire and fuels management, again, third priority area of focus for us just like all the public, federal, and state agencies in California. We play a big role where we have direct protection authority over 60 million acres across California. One of the statistics Mike pointed out, there are over a thousand communities identified at risk being adjacent to potential wildfires coming through communities. BLM public lands surround 31% of those communities throughout the state.

So we play a very active role in the fire suppression and fuels work. In the last year in California across the state, we traded just under 50,000 acres of fuels throughout the state. A lot of it here in the Desert as well. We're continuing to increase kind of the work we're doing across the state. With that here in this next fiscal year and trying to increase our role on the state taskforce as well. I'm going to sit as one of the executive members now with the forest, regional forester. BLM will have a seat at the table as far as the Executive Committee for that taskforce and utilize that and bring additional resources to the table.

And then lastly our conservation stewardship. Obviously here in the Desert, a big focus on conservation. We've focused on land and water conservation fund acquisitions over the previous years and really been successful. Get that as well as obviously a lot of restoration work that's happening throughout the state. Some of what we got to hear about yesterday underground there. That's a big part of our mission and will continue to be moving forward with that. Those are a few areas I wanted to share. I know I don't have much time and want to leave a few minutes for questions that folks might have before transitioning.

So I will-- three minutes. I'll stop there. Three minutes for questions. So folks, please jump in.

>> MIYAMOTO: We can go to, after the public comment period, we'll have time if we want to do more questions for Joe. Just a little bit of time.

>> MCGLYNN: I haven't heard anything or I'm wondering in the context of the state office about the interpretation and application of public land rule and how that's going to go?

>> STOUT: Yeah, public land rule, you know, new regulation that went into effect this last summer. Brought in new tools to the agency as well as kind of packaged some of what we already were doing. So it had a little bit of both. Clearly, this is probably one of the rules that will get attention from the new administration. I think the agency is still moving out and moving forward, implementing the public land rule.

But probably not doing as aggressively as-- we're doing some of the things not necessarily under the public land rule like our assessment, inventory, and monitoring that's a program we've had for a while, so we're looking at how we can expand that. Folks are taking a little bit of a pause to see how things settle out with that rule because that's one of the ones that most likely will get scrutinized by the new team. So that's just a fact. It's still there and being implemented across the bureau but there's a little bit of a wait and see.

>> LYNCH: Okay. Questions or we can save those for after the public comment period. So, Hans, I'll turn it over to you for the public comment period.

>>HAAS: It's time to open the floor for public comment on agenda items. And now, Kate is going to go over the public comment protocols. Kate?

>> MIYAMOTO: Okay. So we will have three minutes for each public comment. And if there's time at the end, we'll open it up for an additional comment. Please use this time to address the DAC only. We will start with comments in the room, well we don't have any in the room. So we'll start with any virtually. If you raise your hand, we'll answer it in the order that you raised your hand.

Okay, we have Steven.

>> GIBBS: Steven, you can unmute.

>> STEVEN GJERSTAD: Thank you. My name is Steven Gjerstad. I own 62 acres in the Western Mojave. There's an OHV route that runs through my property. And there are 4.8 miles, BLM designated OHV routes in the 648-acre section where my property is located and in 66 acres of contiguous private property in an adjacent section. On the 706 acres there are 40 BLM route markers. These violate the designation cite in 43 CFR 8342.1 and violate the understanding stated by the BLM on page 4,-115. On the environmental impact statement that's been submitted to Federal Court in the case brought by the Center for Biological Diversity. I've been trying to get it closed in the past 38 months. Which creates a dangerous condition and considerable damage to private property. I began my effort to address this with a letter to Karen Mouritson on October 7, 2021, 38 months ago. I received a response from Brian Croft on June 27, 2024, quote, the BLM is not authorized to designate the area around your private property as closed to off highway vehicles as most of the surrounding land is not managed by the BLM.

This is nonsensical. The BLM has established the routes. They produced maps in collaboration with the Friends of Jawbone. They placed kiosks all around the area showing the routes through private property. Mr. Croft states that they cannot close them, but they clearly have enough authority to open them and promote them.

In response, I sent to Karen Mouritson on February 14, 2023, photographs of the 40 BLM carsonite route markers on the 706 private property. I received an email from Tracy Stone Manning on February 10, 2024 she said, as I understand the field office has been in touch and addressing to address your concerns. I received an email from Gordon Toevs, stating Director Stone Manning is correct, our field office is working on a response. As you know, the BLM has examined the route and removed any indication of a BLM route on your property. I have also CC'd the field manager on this email who will have the most up to date information, end quote. (READING).

I discussed this issue with Marc Stamer on my property on March 2024. Mr. Stamer essentially repeated the argument that Brian Croft had made which is they cannot close the route. I would like to continue speaking if there are no other presenters. I'll pause now.

>> MIYAMOTO: Okay, thank you, Steven. Next up we have Anitra Kass.

>> ANITRA KASS: I'm on a different set up because I'm traveling. Hello everybody, my name is Anitra Kass I'm the Southern California Representative for the Pacific Crest Trail Association. I want to give a quick update on some things going on. This is positive update. So yay! In early November, some positive-- I mean, you'll get it.

In early November, some PCTA staff, staff from Palm Springs BLM and staff from the Sand to Snow Monument went out and did an overnight in the lower section of Mission Creek, basically from our good partners from Wildlands from the stone house there, hiked PCT north mission creek to see in person some of the damage from tropical storm Hillary. That's the negative part. But the good news is we got out there, worked together as a team.

Did some assessment, in-person assessment of the work that needs to do there. There's a ton of work that needs to be done. It is a little overwhelming but it's good work. We have a short work window each season in which to get it done but we're starting to put plans in place for what we might be able to accomplish starting in the spring of 2025. Also working on getting additional resources, big thanks to our partners both BLM and Forest Service who are able to get some of the URFO funding for this section of trail. And so yeah, just excited about being able to get resources there, get to work there, and make it a better situation for all of our trail users and public land users. So big thanks to the staff at Palm Springs almost and-- monument staff who were able to get out with us. That's the update I have for you all. Thank you so much.

>> MIYAMOTO: Okay. I see no other hands raised. There's no additional-- okay, Steven, you are allowed another three minutes.

>> GIBBS: Steven, you can unmute yourself.

>> GJERSTAD: Thank you. So I think most of the people in this room have heard me talk about this issue. And my 38-month long effort to get OHV routes through my property closed. It's been, you know, frustrating. It's been a long haul. But you all know about it, most of you know about it.

But the new State Director Joe Stout doesn't know about it. And according to the federal regulations, you're the officer who has the authority to make this determination. And you know, while there's a catch 22 here, where the catch 22 that Joe Stout, I'm so sorry-- the catch 22 that Brian Croft mentioned is that they don't have the authority to close routes on private property. Well, if you've opened the route on private property, you really need to take responsibility for it.

You know, if you don't have the authority under the coat of federal regulations, and if you state explicitly in a document filed with Federal Court that you understand that you don't have that authority, then you need to take responsibility for the fact that you've done something that you don't have the authority to do. It's a simple matter.

And you know, the riders have been reckless, disrespectful, destructive, hostile. And it's just-- and then you know, ultimately it doesn't make sense to ask private citizens to operate an off-highway motor vehicle recreation facility on behalf of the Federal Government of the United States. You have a \$400 million budget. You can do these kinds of things and manage them safely. We can't. You know, we don't have any enforcement authority. There's nothing we can do

but all the Sheriff or come to these meetings and get our three minutes to tell you about our frustrations and our difficulties.

But you know, we just don't have the resources and the authority to manage an activity that's so dangerous. So I think you need to address this. It's been ongoing for 38 months. You've been clearly informed about the problems. I'm sorry that Mr. Stout that you've come into a situation that Karen Mourtison ignored for her entire ten tour from the time I notified her 38 month is ago. But this is the fact. The BLM has ignored this problem for a very long time. And I really would appreciate if you do something about it. And thank you.

>>MIYAMOTO: Okay, thank you again, Steven. Any other public comments online? I don't see any other hands raised. okay. Seeing no other, I'll turn it back to you, Hans.

>> HAAS: Thank you, Kate. So why don't we scoot the agenda forward here and do our 10:00 o'clock item. We're going to open the floor up to DAC members who would like to give us another one-to-two-minute update about their work or if you have additional questions for your State Director. We will take the next 15 minutes or so here and do that. So whatever you DAC members have statements or questions.

>>BANIS: Joe, I want to take a second. When you mentioned the continuing resolution. I'm not sure the DAC members realize this, am I correct that if you have a continuing resolution. That's covering about let's say 25% of your year, you're limited to really spending just 25% of your annual budget even in some ways, line items.

If you have some large to-dos that are fully, that are if your budget, you sometimes can't address those or undertake those until enough of the fiscal year or enough continuing resolutions have gone through to be able to allow you to do that. Am I right with that understanding? That's something I heard recently and I believe it. And I found it really interesting. And I'm not sure DAC members appreciate that.

>> STOUT: Yeah, for the most part. There's always exceptions. It's like 25% bureau wide. We as a state can only go 25%. If there are projects that really is critical, you can get exceptions. But it's looking at it across the board as a bureau. In essence, you're correct that we're kind of restricted to how much we can move out in some of the bigger kind of price tag projects and initiatives.

>> BANIS: So just really goes to show how important it is that our Congress do their job and brings budgets and pass budgets, and BLM is not the only one in that boat. Other agencies running on continuing resolutions. And yeah, maybe lets you keep the doors open so to speak and go day-to-day. But it really doesn't let you make monumental progress on larger priorities. So next time you guys are talking to your Congress person, keep that in mind. Thanks, Joe.

>> Go ahead.

>> HOLLIDAY: In talking about budget money, I want to hear you explain to us, I know that you allocated money from almost into California and you have to allocate that out to the field offices. And they have to allocate that out to their projects if you will. Can you explain how you go about that? Is there any particular criteria that you use?

>> Yeah, so each, many whether some of this states treat it differently. Each state or region is able to figure out how they want to allocate their funds. Certain states keep all the funds at the state office and all the districts and field offices charge accordingly and it's managed there. In California we move it out to the districts and strongly encourage the districts to move it out to the field offices. I'm a firm believer that field manager should have a budget and have the accountability associated with managing the budget. That's how we operate here in the state.

How we determine which funds go out, we have budget allocation models. BAMs as we refer to them as an acronym. And based on the different programs, there's criteria, workload drivers, different criteria that factors into how much funding is allocated to a particular field office based on the program workload and so forth. It's a simple way of saying, there are those allocation models, they get reevaluated every three to five years or when folks want to take a look at those. That plays into it.

And then field offices are able to compete for project dollars as well. There's a national process that folks work through, where in the different programs they can apply for, like one time project dollars to fund a particular work on the ground project, so forth. But that's a really simple way of describing how it works.

>> HAAS: Any other DAC members with update or a question?

>> BANIS: Um, on a grander scheme of things, I'm sorry to bring up a sore area. The West Mojave Route designation project suffered a loss in court. Surprised me. Have there been discussions on how to move forward. Are there any decisions or plans on moving forward yet? Or are those conversations still undergoing?

>> STOUT: We did get an order from a judge on the west Mojave. And I'm sure a lot of you have read that 100-page order. There's a lot in there to look at. In general, found BLM did not show our work in how we utilized the minimization criteria for our route designation. We're in the process of sitting down with the field offices, districts, and so forth in trying to dissect that and figure out what some potential paths forward could be.

On the plus side, the court did acknowledge the great work done by the Bureau as far as the NEPA analysis goes. For the most part found the NEPA analysis was solid, comprehensive as well as some of the data collections that the Bureau did upfront in providing that foundation across the landscape.

The next step will be working with the plaintiffs and the judge to go through the remedy process and figure out where we go next. Decision is still, WEMO decision did not get set aside. It's still in effect. The Barstow field office and others are still implementing that decision. There's still restoration work happening on the ground and maintenance work happening, et cetera. We will be working with the plans to figure out that next step as far as remedy goes. And that could take a significantly long time.

The last time we did have a challenge to the WEMO decision back in 2006, I think to get to a remedy, it took two years. As far as where we go. I'm not saying that's what is happening this

time. It's in everyone's interest to figure out how we move forward and what it looks like. Those discussions are underway and will be continuing.

>> BANIS: And programmatic agreement with respect to cultural resources, that's still moving forward? It's in the final phase.

>>STOUT: For the DRECP?

>> BANIS: I'm sorry. That was for DRECP? Thank you. Get my acronyms mixed up.

>>LYNCH: Any others?

>> HAAS: All right. Not seeing anyone else raising their hand with questions or comes. Do we want to move on forward to hear about Imperial Sand Dunes?

>> Yep.

>> HAAS: All right. Ahead of schedule, let's keep going then. It's my pleasure to introduce Mr. Matt Lohr, El Centro field manager and Alex Schlumpberger, Acting Advisory Outdoor Recreation Planner to present on the Imperial Sand Dunes recreation area draft business plan.

>>MATT LOHR: My name is Matt Lohr, El Centro Field Manager with Mike Carpenter, Acting chief ranger, and Alex. This team put together this business plan over the summer and the Fall. And I want to thank Shelly for supporting that and our state office, Andrew-- our recreation chief and State Director. And get this business plan presented to you today. I'll turn it over to a Alex. We have new DAC and people in public how we are able to charge a fee or have a fee program out.

>> ALEX SCHLUMPBERGER: Good morning, everyone. I understand you got a presentation on FLREA the last DAC meeting. It will be short and sweet for this go around.

So the Federal Land Recreation Enhancement Act, has authority to land management such as park service, BLM, Fish & Wildlife and BOR and Forest Service. Allows the agencies to retain fees to develop recreation sites such as camp grounds, rental cabins and day use sites. We developed this plan in the BLM recreation fee policy to establishes future management goals for the El Centro Field Office recreation fee program.

So under FLREA it requires most of the revenue brought in to be reinvested into these sites. Identifies eligible and ineligible expenditures for recreation fee revenues. Requires public involvement for new fee, fees or changes to proposals and requires the established and use of Advisory committees to make recommendations on certain aspects of fee program.

So under FLREA there are three times of fees charged, standard amenity fees - basic day use type fees. Expanded amenity fees, which provide camping and things like that and special recreation permit fees which is what we charge in the Imperial Sand Dunes Recreation Area.

So specifically referred in the business plan of the individual special recreation permit, specialized recreation use on federal lands, measures are needed to for natural and cultural resource protection, health and safety of visitors and also to allocate capacity, disperse recreation

use. Examples, certain wilderness areas, target shooting ranges and special motorized vehicle recreation areas.

>>LOHR: Now we're talking about our business plan. Our business plan is a ten-year plan for operation. So in that business plan we are asking to increase the fees October 1, 2025 for next season. We have a plan that we can implement additional fee increases over that ten-year period.

So ISDRA, operation fee on recreation areas have been around for over two decades. The fee was last increased in October 1, 2013, it's been 12 years. If we get it approved today, it will be 12 years. And a little bit about this. I know people reached out as public comment asking us, how's our money spent? I want to share that today. 56% of operation in ISDRA is fee collection. 21% is federally appropriated funding. (away from mic) 2.2 million in our operating budget. We have to continue to operate with the visitors that go out there. Last is our OHV grand funding, we have a great partnership with California State Parks. Alex's health and safety grand is \$200,000 how many years later. Those grants aren't increasing at the same time we have to put money towards the grant to make sure we secure them. Our office secures them. Part of that OHV grant is half a million to public safety and half a million for ground operations. It's done through those state grants.

In order to continue these essential services and to continue the plan for the future, the health and safety, keep the same level of services we are asking today that the DAC approve our ten year plan that starting October 1, 2025, raising the fees.

I did want to go to the next slide and share with you. So this is our revenue. These are our expenditures, and this is what was left. The difference.

So the first two years of the business plan of 2012 they had extra cash flow, extra fund in reserves. The later years as we run out in the plan, the last couple of years, three years we put in money 1.2 million for the new ranger station, the Federal Government is going to contribute -- 1.2 million of our fees will help fund that. That is the investment from the Federal Government to build the ranger station. It's 14 million-- we're going to actually, the fees we put towards that. You see this. This \$961,000, if it wasn't for the El Centro staff, to go on fires and details, this would have been 1.2, \$1.3 million. I want to thank the El Centro team for being innovative and creative and looking how we spend our funds. We need this fee increase, or we have to reduce services. I want to thank the team for being creates at this the last few years. I'm going to turn it over to Alex.

>>SCHLUMBERGER: So how reuse our fees. This is based off of the last five years of averaging. 23% of our fees used for maintenance operations, covers anything from cleaning sand off roads, cleaning restrooms, campground improvements, things of that nature. 22% visitor services, including interpretation, outreach, visitor information. Emergency services and OHV technical rescue. 29% to law enforcement, related to visitor use and health and safety. 25% to the fee program management, so this is the direct operating costs associated with that free program. So includes the fee contract itself to large establishment, about 80 vendors across Southern California into the Phoenix area and Imperial Sand Dunes, sell permits to visitors, the south

ranger stations for selling permits. And 1% for overhead costs for staff labor or travel costs associated with Imperial Sand Dunes.

Maintenance, we do sand removal maintenance. We have 80 acres of groomed camping pads throughout the Imperial Sand Dunes we maintain. We have a couple of vending pads where commercial vendors can set up, goes a year-round, seven days a week can be open, firewood, food and beverage services, parts, basic maintenance needs. We have 17 miles of maintained routes within in. Replacement and upkeep of various signs of kiosk throughout the Imperial Sand Dunes. Sensitive resource, fencing and signage. And upkeep of our ranger stations.

Under visitor services, emergency medical services. So four OHV park rangers provide critical emergency and medical and specialized rescue. And within ISDRA. About 400 incidents per season which runs mid-October through mid-April. Visitation-- so during this response to a majority-- associated to OHV recreation. 44% of our treated are released, back out after being seen. 19% transported by ground ambulance to a local hospital. 17% transported by aird to level two or level one trauma center. 18% search and rescues and 2% fatal. In addition to emergency response, park rangers make proactive contact about safe responsible, OHV, about 11,000 contacts per year directly related to safety.

>>MIKE CARPENTER: I'll jump in here. For law enforcement that's usually the biggest visual input for Imperial Sand Dunes we are the most visible because of the nature of our job. We provide law enforcement services in order to supporting, we assist with coordinating for helicopter and search and rescues. We work closely with Imperial County Sheriff department. And U.S. border control. And CHP, for accident and investigations.

We have four main holidays during our season, that is Halloween, Thanksgiving, new year's and President's Day. We have two off weekends in there, Veteran's Day and Martin Luther King. During those four main holidays we're averaging over 120,000-140,000 visitors per weekend. We serve about a large metropolitan city and manage that and work with that. During those four main holidays, approximately 25 BLM law enforcement officers are detailed from Idaho. Because of our staffing levels we bring everyone and from everywhere to assist us. It's a big increase to pay their salaries and overtime. That is just the nature of our business, the visitors we get.

So this is our fee proposed increase. This is what we're proposing for October 1, 2025. The last fee increase was 2013. So it's been a while. So we sell to off site, what that means, if you buy your pass before you get there, it's cheaper. We're trying to cut down on the cost of selling the permits at the dunes - our fee contractor has to provide a staff to do that. We give them incentive prior. Currently they're \$35. So on site and off site will increase \$20 each. So from \$35 to \$55 offsite and on site will go from \$50 to \$70. That's when you buy it in the store there. Season pass, good for the entire season, currently \$150, increasing to \$185.

Where do these fee increases come from? As we touched on 2013, we've all seen the price increases, inflation. The 31% increase in consumer price index since 2013. That's how we came up with the numbers. We did an analysis with the areas around us, the recreation areas and did a cost comparison there. And that's where we came up with the fee increase.

In the business plan, the business plan was designed on a ten-year plan. The goal of the ten-year plan was to predict for the future as well. There is proposed fee increases in there for those ten years. But the biggest thing to note is those are not set in stone increases. The BLM reserves the right not to impose the increases or impose the increases. So and if we look at doing the cost increases it would be October 1 of every year. We will keep moving forward.

As I said, authorized officer, if needed. That is the biggest thing. It's not set in stone. We're not saying we will increase every three years, it's as needed. It's based on that consumer price index and the proposed fees we're going to get in a minute is based on the consumer price index. Broke that out over ten years and we broke it down to three years how we came up with the future dollar amount.

The fee increases why are we increasing? Since COVID we've seen a substantial increase in visitation, for example, Halloween up 22 percent. Previous Halloween, we're at 19%. We're seeing substantial increase and consistent since COVID.

So operating costs, everything is getting more expensive. Salaries getting more expensive. Materials and fuels are getting more expensive. The day-to-day operating cost is getting more expensive. We're also going to look at the disperse camping cultural impacts, what we need to do to protect the resources, how it's affecting it. And also as Matt said our appropriate dollars keep decreasing every year. That's been a trend since I've been in BLM. And OHV grants has stayed the same, stayed steady consistently. We usually get everything we ask for. But we ask for the max and that has not been increasing with the years going on.

Our goal is to continue to provide the level of services we do now because I think the visitors are expecting that. We want to be able to continue that level of service and simply need more money to do that.

So here's the structure I talked about moving forward. So like I said, this is not set in stone. This is a hypothetical if we need to. The goal is to do it efficiently and quickly and not have to go back to DAC every time to go through a new business plan. Business plan is very time consuming and expensive for us to create and do. Just hypothetical, like I said, this is based off of the breakdown of the consumer price index we saw in history. Fee increase every three years. If we do it, it would increase \$10 for weekly and \$15 for season. (READING). And you can see how that would run out. So if we were to do that every three years, at the end of the ten year cycle, it would be off site \$75, on site \$90 and the season \$215. I want to keep reiterating that it's not set in stone we will do that every three years. We just don't know what the future holds.

>> LOHR: We're doing at a minimum of three years out.

>> CARPENTER: There will be no back to back. We skip the first three years and didn't do it until six years we would still be going off the first year of fee increase, \$10 or \$15.

>> SCHLUMPBERGER: So is part of the plan, greater public outreach and comments-- so published a press release. It was put out on the BLM web page, posted on BLM California and the Imperial Sand Dunes BLM Facebook accounts. We sent email notifications to many partner groups including the American Sand Association, San Diego coalition and many others. And we

posted flyers at ranger stations. Public comments from October 25 through November 25. And the formal process was if someone wanted to comment, they would email the BLM El Centro email accounts to submit those comments formally.

So of that, we received 34 public comments through our El Centro field office. Additionally, during Camp RZR, we received 200 comments from that. Overall, 85% of the feedback we received support increasing fees. 10%, did not support increasing fees. 3% were comments not relevant to the business plan and 1% were neutral.

>> LOHR: Thank you for letting us present today. We're open to taking question.

>>HAAS: We're going to turnover to Hans. And he'll-- yeah.

>> LOHR: Thank you for this opportunity.

>> HAAS: Thank you for the presentation. First, we are going to open it up to public comment regarding this proposal. Do we have anyone in person who is here to comment on this proposal specifically? All right. I don't think we have any members of the public there.

How about online? Do we have any members online of the public who would wish to comment specifically on this proposal?

>>MIYAMOTO: I am not seeing any hands, Hans. Give another 30 seconds or so. Oh, we have one. So Jim?

>> GIBBS: Jim, go ahead and unmute.

>> JIM BRAMHAM: All right. Thank you very much. Really appreciate the opportunity be to speak before the DAC today. I represent the American Sand Association today. My history with fees goes back to when they were first implemented in the dunes before it was passed. And this goes back to the Ed Hasety days. And out of that came, an agreement between the bureau and state parks to make possible publish entities that would gather for a while and bi-monthly and so on, called technical review teams and became subgroups of the DAC that had outreach to not only OHV groups but local interests and gateway communities to offer comments on anything happening at the dunes. They were given the opportunity early on to see the background of both appropriated dollars, fee dollars and grant dollars.

And from that, had a large amount of public trust was created. And I think that that really moved the fee process and smoothed out a lot of the early problems. If there is anything I would like to offer is to, in some way, recreate those, this also happened to Dumont, it made the insulation of fees at Dumont easier because they started with a technical review team rather than ended with it. So I just think that that would be in your best interest to try to push that forward.

ASA has pushed forward written comments for you today. I hope they're in your packet. We appreciate the returning to the math that was agreed upon originally where it would take a visitor to show up the fourth time to make a regular pass, excuse me, a season pass financially responsible. Now it's at five and the proposal we see here brings that back to that same math

where your fourth visit basically becomes free if you buy an annual pass instead of the fourth visit.

We also see that there are tools needed moving forward that aren't going to be implemented right away. That includes the idea of registering these passes online and some of the other things that are in this proposal that need to have a little more refinement. I think that's a place where the technical review team could go a long way.

The other thing is vendor compensation. As these fees go up, the vendors are still required to buy the passes which means it's a huge amount of money they're asked to give to initiate that. We don't want to see anything that happens that creates less opportunity for people to cooperate and be legal. We're very concerned about making sure that there's a way that we can get these passes in the hands of the public and that the vendors are justly compensated for their investment. And thank you very much.

>> HAAS: Thank you, Jim. If there are no other public comments and you would like three more minutes we could go back to you. Right now, let me open up the floor to anyone else, member of the public or anyone else who has something.

>> MIYAMOTO: I'm not seeing any hands on Zoom, Hans.

>> HAAS: All right. Neither do I. Jim, if you would like three more minutes, please raise your hand. We will be able to give it to you. All right. I see Jim is raising his hand.

>>BRAMHAM: I can fill three more hours on this if you want me to. [Laughter]. Those of you who know me are afraid I might do that. I don't think there's a whole lot more on that. There are minutiae in here I want to say we're thankful for our opportunity as ASA to meet with leaders at Imperial. I think we made great inroads, making that a good establishment again. We got a lot of our questions answered at that point. And of course, you're never satisfied with anything that the government ever offers.

But this thing is, I think well researched, and the dollar amounts are justified. We have concerns about how the tools are going to work moving forward and specifically the idea of making sure the vendors are compensated and don't have to somehow buy even more, take dollars out of their pockets to bypasses to make them available to the public which we think is going to decrease the number of vendor locations or decrease the passes the vendor is willing to buy. On weekends making it less possible or force people to buy on site which is higher cost which won't go well with the public if they can't find them. We had that problem several times in the past where vendors decided not to participate the last several weeks of the season. Passes were impossible to find on the way in and you're forced to buy at the ranger station and complicated enforcement and compliance. That is not addressed in this business plan. And I know that's part of the contract. But it's something I think the DAC needs to at least consider moving forward.

And we'll go with that. Thank you.

>> HAAS: All right. Thank you very much, Jim. I'm not seeing anyone else from the public. Looking to speaker to ask the questions on this. It is time to open this topic up for DAC member discussions. Would anyone like to kick it off? Ed?

>>ED STOVIN: Thank you. I like to go to the Desert and camp in the Desert. I don't want to pay to go out there. And I have my places I go. And I camp. And I don't pay for anything. My kind of camping, I don't need any services. The Imperial Sand Dunes has unique circumstances where services, extensive services are required. And to keep that area open for off-road vehicle use, these services need to be provided. And I'm going to give a couple of examples.

I know Matt went over some of the things they spend money on. There was a weekend when a big weekend when one of the roads overnight, enough sand blew across the road and put the sand in a bunch of motor homes and not able to leave the area. They're ready to get right out there and push the sand off. Having that kind of equipment and staff ready to go costs money.

61 restrooms, think about that. The toilet paper, the cleaning, and the pumping, that cost a lot of money. And the dunes used to be known as a very reckless area. Having quality law enforcement there spread out, that costs a lot of money.

The rescue buggy, I don't know if you guys know. They have two rescue buggies, one in the north, one in the south. It's a dune buggy with sand paddles and the right side is a stretcher. One person drives, the victim is in the stretcher and EMT is behind the driver working on the victim and transporting the person. They have two of those with staff ready to go. That costs money.

The salary range at El Centro went up recently. They were at a lower level for many years. The past year or two, they got boosted up to the equivalent of the Los Angeles cost of living. The cost to staff there across the board went up, 40%. And I look at these OHV grants that they talk about. And I understand that this year, the pot, the whole thing is \$30 million. Next year's allocation is \$28 million. Normally you expect this to go up. And it's actually going to go down.

What I'm getting at is I'm supportive of this fee increase. Now, 11 years ago I was on the dune subgroup and came before the DAC and said, they want an increase. I think it was justified. This time I also agree it's justified. However, there's one small problem and I wanted Dick Holliday to talk about that. I may come back and talk more. But for now, I'm very supportive but things need to be done just right.

>> Turn the floor over to you.

>> HOLLIDAY: Yeah, I'm totally-- I've been known the dunes for a long time. And I support the fees. The amount of money they're asking for is trivial into the whole-- I think they should be asking for more.

The problem is, within the fee proposal, there are things that are not right for me anyway. One of them is they have some words in there that say there's an authorized officer can change the fee. Not that I don't trust the BLM, but I don't.

When it says the authorizing officer can change the fee, that's not the way the law is written. There's public comment and DAC approval. It concerns me that we have approved this plan, we

approved unlimited authority for BLM to change the fees. That's not what the law says. The law says there will be public comment or DAC approval or recreation approval. Actually it's the RRAC. That's my main concern in this whole thing.

I would like to see the thing we're voting on, not contain that, that says you're going to change the fee unilaterally. That's not what the law says. A couple of other issues insist fee in the proposal that-- like Jim talked about. He talked about a different way to collect the fees. We've gone quite a ways to make it pretty easy for people to get fees. Gas stations and rest places along the way. If we go to a thing like recreation.gov, we now have bypassed that. How will that vendor make his money back. It's a costly process. To give you history for that.

A few years ago, we were getting a new vendor. And I had a friend of mine that wanted to do that. And I wrote a business plan to do that. And looking at that business plan to do that, the amount of money that it cost for that vendor to do that, all the people he has to have, salesmen, locations, people in the office, all this stuff, it's a very costly process for them. We pay for that with fees, a big amount.

My concern is, if we go to a separate thing, online thing with the government, recreation.gov

These people are not going to make as much money and not do it anymore. They wouldn't make any money. So we'll lose the other places that people can go get to. The only place to get a permit is at the dunes or the online services. That's a concern.

The other-- public comments, we have-- Jim says, the vendor does very good. There are a lot of easily access places to get fees along the way to the dunes. It's not a problem. But if we don't have a vendor that can't meet that requirement, we're shooting ourselves in the foot.

The other thing about changing the fees unilaterally as what you're saying. You generate a program here where you can unilaterally raise or lower fees. I think you're shooting yourself in the foot. Because if you put the things in here and we have to go through and process that, I don't like the idea that you can unilaterally change the fees.

For that reason, just reading your draft proposal and things that are in there, I don't have a problem with money. I have the problem with the way you're processing it.

>> LOHR: One is recreation.gov we were to put in by the state and federal office as an option. We don't need that option ever, we have it in there because we want to be transparent. That's something we're looking at right now.

I did meet with a contract vendor. What percent of initial we lose because one year left with our contract this year. We asked what amount of vendors we would lose and its about 3-5%. We can address that. We go to our fee-- (away from mic). We can address on how we do that. There are a lot of small businesses out there. I've taken time to talk to small businesses, some of gas stations, we don't want to lose that option because that brings generation tax to the cities around us.

So right now, we put it in there for someday we have to go that route. We're happy with the-- we have one year left on our contract. We can't address the vendors getting more or the contractor

until we go out to bid on that contract. But it is top priority. I want to thank Jim and ASA for bringing that up. It's important for the small businesses we want to make sure that happens but we have to go through that process.

>>HOLLIDAY: Let me ask you this question. When we vote here, are we voting for the whole proposal, the whole thing you did?

>>LOHR: Correct, yes.

>> HOLLIDAY: So you have a program where you're going to raise the fees for ten years on your program. You're basing that on consumer price index. What's your index for changing those fees on the consumer price index? We're using that as an index. We need some criteria that you're using for that if that's what you're going to use.

>> >LOHR: I think it's based on consumer price index over three years. A minimum of three years,

>> HOLLIDAY: It goes up ten percent, what are you going to raise the fees? 10%?

>> NATHAN FRANCIS: The consumer price index goes three percent and usually you see a three percent increase in-- usually you reference CPI to govern how high it goes up based on cost.

>> LYNCH: You identified what the fee increase would be. Correct me if I'm wrong. My understanding is even if the consumer price index goes up 15%, our fee increase is what's identified in the business plan? No more?

>>MCGLYNN: Clarification on the language. So when it's at the discretion of you all, then the discretion would be to increase the amount and no more. It's the language. Just approve the increases right now for the next ten years but at your discretion you can defer those.

>> STOVIN: So I'm going to read off of Dick's computer. Page 7 that says, the proposed fees would be reviewed and adjusted if needed by the authorized officer every three years. So who is the authorized officer?

>> LOHR: I am, the field manager. So I look at those. So we can delay another two or two if it's out there. I don't think we're going to take that into account. We don't know how the future holds in the economy. Really as a team we shared, done a lot to keep the current fee at that level. We are going to take the time, maybe three years, four years, five years until we raise this fee, until we feel comfortable. That's presenting-- like the DAC, bring that up and let you guys know what we're doing and how's that moving along and stuff.

>> STOVIN: So the sentence is referring to those three year increments?

>>LOHR: Correct.

>>STOVIN: So it's not perfectly clear in the business plan that this sentence is referring to that. Now that I see that, it makes more sense.

>>LOHR: This could be 29, 30, 31. It's when the fees go, we're going to look at that.

>> HOLLIDAY: Again what Shelly said there. Most fees are locked in there. You're not changing the fees for any reason--

>>LOHR: Depends on the year we hit. CPI-- the minimum three years after each fee increase. If we wait until 2030, we can't look at it again until 2033.

>> LYNCH: If we were going to change the fees above what those numbers are, we would have to come back to the DAC? We have to adjust our business plan and come back to the DAC.

>> LOHR: We met with ASA and others. We work closely through this process, make sure we don't raise it too high or low or what is the right amount. We have some letters that we didn't raise it high enough. This is a great price. So thank you. It's been time working with our stakeholders.

>> MCGLYNN: This is a switch gears. But so each year there's 400 EMS calls. And 2% of those are fatalities. So is it-- on an average year, it means eight people out there are dying?

>> SCHLUMPBERGER: Our average is four to eight people per year.

>>MCGLYNN: Would any increase investment into safety, save more lives? What would that look like?

>> LOHR: I think it's us having a great team-- before, years ago, it used to be higher.

>>SCHLUMPBERGER: It used to be higher even internally. I've been with almost for almost 12 years when I started as seasonal park ranger, I was the first to be EMT certified. And that's our baseline standard. Before that it was first responder, first-aid. Now some are permanent staff. Our certified EMT level so doing IV administration as well as we have certain advanced life support medications that we give for cardiac, diabetes, drug overdoses allergic reaction. A lot we can do on the ground that I think is decreasing the mortality rates as well as the increase in medicine. Every two years we're doing pre-hospital trauma life support training. Staying up to date with the most current trauma care trends.

>>LYNCH: There are a couple of things. So we also have support. We only have how many EMS rangers?

>> SCHLUMPBERGER: On a given weekend--

>>LYNCH: Just BLM.

>> SCHLUMPBERGER: Four just for El Centro. Now every weekends we up staff. Right now we have a good relationship with BLM Alaska Fire service, they bring down hotshots that are EMT qualified to augment our staff. We rely heavily on U.S. border patrol. We have a good relationship with the El Centro sector. They currently have four paramedics on staff to help augment. We have life support capabilities.

>>LYNCH: I will say a couple of things. Outreach the staff to take on-- they do outreach at events. They were at OHV show, Sand Dunes work show educating folks. We see users who don't know how to use the brakes when they come down there. Imagine, that's a recipe for disaster or an accident.

The other thing, some of these fees help to go pay for those additional support for EMS. If you're out in the middle of the dune somewhere, the time it takes for someone, especially if those folks are on another call, to go on another call with life threatening accidents, having that extra staff is how we reduce the fatalities because the response time we have more people to respond now instead of folks being tied up at an incident and can't respond to a second incident.

It's the outreach, the buggies that Ed mentioned. You can't get trucks out to some of those places. You can't. Oldsmobile Hill, you can't get a truck out there, but our buggies can get out there. Having that riding equipment to reach the remote areas and have staff to respond. I think it's a combination of all those things that have helped to reduce the fatality numbers.

>> SCHLUMPBERGER: And also for perspective, our response time is under nine minutes. Across the board nationwide it's 8-minute response. And we're doing that in the middle of the Desert. 15 or 20 minutes for on scene providing limited advanced life support.

>> LOHR: My first trial out there for Halloween, two or five helicopters landing, we have to have that Shelly said, the team Homeland Security-- they don't charge us. They go out there for free. We have these great services that don't really cost duners out there. It is, Alex and his team and Mike and his team do a great job, we're spread thin.

>> MCGLYNN: I was coming from a place of concern that maybe we're not spending enough money especially on education and outreach. I'm sure you agree it's a wonderful job. You get overwhelmed.

>> LOHR: We do 15 outreach events each year with some funding from the park grants. We do 15 throughout. Anywhere from how do you put on a helmet. We work with our state parks-- and Sheriff's office. We have an amazing relationship with them. We work with a lot of partners. It's amazing how many resources are out there.

>> LYNCH: The meeting we had with Sheriff's Department as well as state parks we talked about combining outreach efforts and education efforts for OHV. We will be doing more of that. We worked with ASA to supporting their education and outreach. We work with our partners to do our best to try and get to that aspect and educate folks on safety.

>> LOHR: And we had from the counties coming out there with the ROV and ATV-- which is more not as difficult area but easier to navigating spots. Doing more for county residents free of charge. Working with vendors and other agencies to do that.

>> Thanks.

>> Great question.

>> STOVIN: So I want to touch on the fatalities which we hear about fatalities out there. And it's absolutely tragic. But that being said, I believe the dunes current annual visitorship is about 1.2 million, around that.

>> LOHR: 1.4

>> STOVIN: When you think about that number of people in the city, you would imagine that there's going to be fatalities over for whatever reasons, car accidents, injuries, illnesses. And so that number roughly corresponds to how society works. People are born and people pass away. I don't think the numbers are out of line out there. Which is really astounding given the activities that people do, the drinking and driving and the whole people trying to go fast and everything.

While I'm here, the comment period ended for this business plan 12 days ago. And I've actually never seen a plan get pushed this hard and this fast in my years of activism. I think there's a good reason for it. And didn't realize, I think I was talking to Dick about it the other day that eight years ago when Trump became president, he temporarily disbanded all the RACs in the country. It was difficult to do things like we're bringing brought to do here today's. Fee increase. If that were to happen, it's possible that could happen before our next meeting like okay, we're not meeting for a while. I get that we're being pushed in to make this, estimate this decision quickly because it may be an extended amount of time before we're able to reconvene and to make this decision. And that would leave El Centro in a bind.

>> LOHR: And this wasn't because the administration changed. This was having staff on the ground to put this business plan together. So we've been—staffing it's been low at El Centro because we need staff. We need leadership, my position filled, mine's, Alex. We did it record time but we had a plan since June or July with state office that this plan spend four weeks at state office and four weeks the at-- that four weeks went away because we worked with them through the plan. We met with Joe the first week of October and he was like good to go. That next day that went to headquarters and it took two weeks.

We may not have made it this time but we made a plan. It's not the change of administration. We knew we wanted to communicate this sooner or later. Definitely worked closer with ASA and groups to get this done quickly. We followed the timeline and worked to get it done.

>> FRANCIS: This being a ten-year plan, would they allow you to go ahead and put the same level of increases in 2034? You're showing on your presentation, your last raise will be at 31. Would it allow you to do 34 before you have to come back to the DAC?

>> LOHR: Um, we have to see how those increments went. So we have to show what we thought every three to four years. We have to come back to DAC.

>> FRANCIS: You will come back before the ten years is up?

>> LOHR: Just wiggle room. We are not locked into raising it every three years.

>> JOSH MARTELLI: Just a quick comment from the recreation side. We would echo the sentiments of Dick and Ed in particular from a safety perspective. We do a lot of work with the manufacturers of these vehicles. And I think we can all agree that radically changed the landscape. Every issue we've talked about in the last two days is the byproduct of this new, not just one company but five of them who went into mass production on these vehicles.

It's in their best interest to not lose access for their customers to recreate through new legislation, new rules spend. Obviously, they do a lot of outreach directly with Federal Government, state and local governments to sort of preserve that access. Right?

But I'm wondering if they could be asked to be a more direct stakeholder and be more involved even on the budget side to support the things we're talking about. For example Polaris owns 166 acres of land-- the camp razor event since 2012 has attracted tens of thousands of people because it's been a focal pointed of the Halloween weekend. So their invested stakeholder, I'm sure there's an SRP application and bolstering stuff for the event. But it seems to me that they would have a vested interest about the support both there and out of Dumont. The idea being if access becomes restricted or the cost to operate safely falls on the average Joe, wouldn't they have a stake in contributing to that?

>> We have a public lands foundation that has reached out-- that's a nonprofit. So we're not allowed to lobby Congress. But yes, we have been outreaching them through the public lands foundation. [Speakers Overlapping]. [Background Noise]

>> MARTELLI: So that's the vehicle that's set up to get direct support?

>>LOHR: We're working with an analyst to go to state office and talk about, we'd like you to reach out-- putting that list together now. It's a new foundation so it's going to take time for those to develop.

>> STOUT: The Foundation for bridging additional funds to support our recreation mission, we have those conversations with the foundation directly about the Cahuilla Ranger Station seeing if they can go directly to the Polaris' and Honda's and others to see what they can do. That conversation's been open and we're going to continue that. And they're interested in helping down out down the road. Now we have a mechanism to receive some of that outside funds and use it directly on BLM facilities and projects.

>> BANIS: Thank you. I want to first say, really good job containing expenses with FY 20-23. Looking at the consistency and how done you've stayed within the confines of the income you received is commendable. Expense has been going up as we know throughout that period, the pandemic and shortly thereafter the inflation is extraordinary.

And I want it thank you for that. Also want to compliment you on the compliance, the reported compliance with the fees. That number is well done because I think in order to-- it avoids the criticism of saying, well, if you had better compliance, you'd have more money to meet the expenses. You wringed the towel out the best you can. Good work on that. Congratulations on that.

It's obvious the expenses, the income is not sufficient to meet the current cost. And I, too, in that regard, I agree, Terry and others who spoke, my colleagues on the other side of the table that I don't think there's a problem in general with this fee increase in terms of the initial amounts. You're keeping the increase in CPI, 1.3-- I'm sorry, 3% CPI, three percent fee increase. That's very, very reasonable. I think you've done a good job on that.

I want to put in with our DAC members. Remember the last meeting we had a fee proposal increase in Cleveland National Forest. It really only amounted to \$92,000. It sounded only \$92,000. How much of us would like to have \$92,000 in our pocket? I get that. \$92,000 in the grand scheme of things. And the annual expected isn't earth shattering and groundbreaking. This is the first time together doing fee increase. And it's good to have that one to learn with and discuss.

That perspective, we're going to later hear from Angeles National Forest and my math is correct it's an annual boost of about \$340,000. Again it's dollars. You know, it's dollars. And it uses dollars. Again \$340,000 isn't something that I think too terribly worrisome dollar amount for us to be talking about.

I want you to know this increase is 1.5 million dollars. A lot more money, a lot more people, a lot more visitors, larger area. I get it. But that's a lot of dough. Coming out of user' pockets. If you start to factor in the proposed increase in the three- and six-year period, you end up with nearly \$3 million annual boost in fees. And that's nothing to sneeze at.

Said that a billion here and a billion there, after a while, you're talking real money. I'm trying to remember. So it does add up. But I want that as perspective, so we know what we're doing here. That's DAC members, getting millions of dollars here now. Okay?

So don't be scared. That's all right. We can do this. The-- living on a dirt road, sometimes I show up to events in a car that's dusty, dirty, and sometimes some of that runs off on my shirt, on my pants. I hope that doesn't impact how people view or hear what I have to say.

And so I want to try to keep focused on what it is you're trying to say here. But at the same time, I-- I think the car should have been run through the car wash a bit here before coming to the DAC. I think we should have a document that didn't have draft stamped all over it. I feel like I'm not considering a final plan. Should it have gone through a little bit of proofreading? That's all right. Maybe a spell check would have helped. Big agency, millions of dollars, dot the Is and cross the Ts. It feels that we're looking at something that's really been sewn together, wrapped up and put a bow on it.

The math on table four for 2024, doesn't add up in my book. I did the numbers, I don't get the same totals. I don't see anywhere that this-- I don't see if this plan has received the benefit of the public comment period. It still says draft on it. I don't know if the public comments you received during public comment period were, had caused a change where they've taken into consideration-- I don't have like thank you to the Forest Service for a pen addition A for review of the public comments and replies. Whenever we look a draft A going into a final, there's always a summary of public comments and response to the public comments.

In reviewing these fees, our job is to confirm that there is general public support for this plan. And I don't know really that that exists although I do know that the partner organizations ASA and others consulted feel this is very reasonable. And I take that at heart because I think those organizations have their finger on the pulse very well. so that helps.

I think the FY'24 numbers we should have actuals by now on that page.

>> LOHR: The fiscal year ended in September 30.

>> This only passes through the end of the year, right?

>> No, the expenses. The expenses these are FY totals that we have. And we have the totals for all the previous FYs. We have an FY'24 and it still says planned expenditures. It ends September 30. It's a long night for somebody. I think we can add something that is final.

>> LOHR: The system was down for nine weeks.

>>BANIS: That's true. Your end of fiscal year--

>> [Speakers Overlapping]

>> LYNCH: It was decided from fiscal year end. Our financial business management system was down until mid-November. We couldn't get the data.

>> LOHR: We did our best with our budget analyst on the data.

>> BANIS: And I do want to ask Shelly again to just really confirm that the bureau would be coming back to the DAC for addressing some of the fees in this approximate three year and six year period. Did I hear you say that? It wouldn't be -- calendar the authorized officer wouldn't be implementing these increases, it would come back to the DAC?

>> LYNCH: What I said, voting today would allow the authorized officer say in three years I'm doing hypotheticals, to increase the fees to the amount that's shown in the business plan without coming back to the DAC. Now, granted I can't imagine that we would have that discussion in the DAC unless we let you guys know that we were going to move forward, we would present the numbers and identify that in concert or in compliance with the business plan, we are going to increase those fees to the amount established in the business plan.

However, if for some reason, let's say, I don't know the economy went crazy and visitors went through the roof and we're like, a \$15 increase is just unsustainable, we would modify our business plan. We would start over, basically modify our business plan. Come back to the DAC and present the \$15 increase is not going to be enough. We're going to have to come back and increase it by \$20, whatever it is.

Anything outside stated in the business plan, we need to come back to the DAC for approval. What this does is allows the flexibility. It's not unilateral. What it does is allows the BLM flexibility to take a look in three years and say, where are we at? Where are we at with expenditure, cost, and consumer price index? Do we need to change the fees to what we identified in the business plan? If the answer is yes and question feel necessary to move forward with that, we let the DAC know and implement the fees on October 1, that year. If the answer is no, we would also let the DAC know that we made the decision, maybe visitor use goes down, I'm just throwing at example out there-- we don't need those to raise the fees to provide the same level of services we would not raise the fees. We would let the DAC know that we chose not to.

>> MCGLYNN: I think these are critical fee increases for the reasons we talked about. I don't want to guess what the odds are that DAC will be able to have quorum three years from now. So I would like to approve funding three years from now. Because who knows?

>> BANIS: I would add and trust your answer back. That authority is permitted within FLREA. I don't read that it is. As I read it, I'm not a lawyer, as I read it, I see each and every increase has to come in for a review by recreation amenity Advisory Committee. For better or worse, if you have quorum or, I get all that. I don't see it in the law that it's within our authority to do that.

Now, if you've had conversations and reviewed by legal and solicitors and gone through and so forth, I'll take your word for it. If they say it's kosher, it's fine. I'm onboard and with you on that. But that is just-- that's why I say I'm not a lawyer. And I don't see it in FLREA.

>> LYNCH: Matt, I know you guys worked through our state office program as well as headquarters.

>> LOHR: So they're specialist in this area, compliance. They had about a three week period-- they got back two and a half weeks in. They were fine with that. They felt that the FLREA level. And this is common practice with other funds that have been approved in California.

>> BANIS: Awesome. Thank you. Thank you, Matt.

>>LOHR: Definitely. I want to show, I'm going to go back and show the conversations with this group. We want to be transparent. I think day after day, we want to keep you guys in the loop while you're here, share with you how the fees increase, communicate with you a couple of years from now to prepare you guys for any comments or questions. So, thank you for the opportunity.

>> BANIS: My last comment is your last visitor satisfaction survey mentioned in the business plan was 2017. I don't know if you have another one coming soon. You say it happens every five or ten years. I think I'm curious to see how that comes out to be. El Mirage had one recently and came back at 99%, room for improvement.

(indiscernible). [Laughter]

So I think-- but not having that, looking at your income, the dollars brought in over the last four or five years is stable. It's right in that certain area. So I believe I can interpret that as a high satisfaction. They're not, not coming there. And with the compliance of 95%, they're not, not paying their fees.

>> BANIS: That's gonna be funny in the transcripts, isn't it? With that, and thank you for letting me take so much time--

>> LOHR: The customer satisfaction survey. I got here in January, February. How do we get on this? We get chosen. I want it-- 2017 seems like old results. When we get closer, we will make sure to get that. Boots on the ground.

>>BANIS: With that, I would move with the business plan. I don't know if anybody else wants to jump in second. Parliamentary procedure allows us to continue-- I would like to move it have it on the table. We can keep the conversation. Remember, conversation follows a motion. But I

think it's important that we have a motion on the table to discuss here if we're going to discuss further. I would move it.

>>HOLLIDAY: I would like to make sure that I'm hearing what you're saying. The fees aren't going to change at any time. The values of those fees are not going to change.

>> LOHR: Up there?

>>HOLLIDAY: Hold on a second. They're not going to change. And if-- the fees will always be following the FLREA, what the law says as far as changes. Those fees will never change. You may elect not to put one into place which I guess is okay. But you're not going to change those dollar values or those timeframes other than to not do one or you'll come back with what's in the FLREA.

>> LOHR: What Shelly just said, I think Shelly hit that point. If we're going to go above, the \$10 fee, if we go higher, we will come back to you because we have to redo the business plan. We're planning those years, every minimum three years, after that it could be six, year, but after that its another three years.

>>HOLLIDAY: Do you understand it?

>> LOHR: Yeah.

>> HOLLIDAY: Okay.

>> STOVIN: I'd like to second the motion.

>> HAAS: All right. Randy has put the motion. Ed has seconded it. Is there any more discussion with any DAC members before we move to a vote?

>> HOLLIDAY: I'd like to make sure that new proposal-- those are the things, what we said here is in the minutes of the meeting?

>> LOHR: It is recorded.

>>HOLLIDAY: And that the California State Director agrees. [Laughter].

>> LOHR: I will check with Andrew Burrows in our office if we can add the comments in. Still, I have to sign the plan, Shelly and Joe.

>> HOLLIDAY: I have the chart that shows you included the appropriation dollars in there. I think that's very important. When I go out to talk to people, everybody says, I don't want to say I'm the guy that does that, I talk to hundreds of people and none of them have heard about this fee increase. None of them. And I want to show them that chart that says, show that, show the appropriation dollars and I can say the management of the BLM has agreed with the terms and values won't change.

>> And the appropriation dollars is probably higher if you put in border patrol-- they get federal funds. The federal does put a lot into this. It's just what we get as BLM.

>> HAAS: Okay. All right. Well, it sounds like we are ready to take a vote. Would DAC members please give an indication if you are in favor of passing this draft business plan?

>> MIYAMOTO: So we have to go by category, Hans. We have to go by category.

>> All right. Let's do category one, that would be Ed Stovin, Desirea Haggard who I don't believe is with us. Ed votes yes.

>>HAAS: Joshua Martelli.

>> MARTELLI: True.

>>HAAS: And Nathan Francis?

>> FRANCIS: Yes.

>> HAAS: Creed Stone.

>> STONE: Yes.

>> HAAS: All right. Category two, Jack Thompson.

>> THOMPSON: Yes.

>> HAAS: And myself, I vote yes. Jennifer Henning?

>> HENNING: Yes.

>>HAAS: Yes from Jenn.

>> HAAS: Dick Holliday?

>> HOLLIDAY: Yes.

>> HAAS: And Mr. Steven Reyes?

>> REYES: Yes.

>> HAAS: All right. Category three, Dawn Rowe?

>> ROWE: Yes.

>> HAAS: Yes from Dawn. Ann Kulikoff?

>> KULIKOFF: Yes.

>> HAAS: Yes from Ann. Thank you. And Terry McGlynn.

>> MCGLYNN: Yes.

>> HAAS: And Bob Robinson?

>> ROBINSON: Yes.

>> HAAS: And Randy Banis?

>> BANIS: Yes. [LAUGHTER]

>> HAAS: All right. The motion is approved. And congratulations and thank you.

>> LOHR: Thank you for letting us do this presentation today. We look forward to getting you involved with our process. We want to share because it does-- our field office is a really large field office. We want to come back and share the successes of this team. Our El Centro team is a hard-working dedicated team. They go out on weekends, working all these events, and they do it seamlessly. It's amazing. Like you said, the amount of accidents and injuries out there, reduce-- this [inaudible]. I feel blessed to work with them. Thank you to the BLM. Thank you.

>>LYNCH: So it's a break until 11:15.

>> BREAK

>> LYNCH: Okay, in the 11:20. Let's get started to we can stay on agenda. I don't know if Hans is back.

>>HAAS: I sure am. How's it going?

>> LYNCH: Good.

>> HAAS: All right. So next item on our agenda today, I'd like to call on the U.S. Forest Service to present the Angeles National Forest fee proposal.

>> JUSTIN SEASTRAND: All right. Thank you, Hans, and first of all, thanks so much to Shelly and Kate and all the BLM team for giving us this opportunity today. It's quite a public service we're doing. Let the Forest Service to come in. And meet the FLREA responsibilities.

My name is Justin Seastrand, I'm the public services staff officer, recreation is one of the programs I oversee out of the Angeles National Forest. I'll give an intro and turn to over to Jeremy to give the detail of the fee increase. The Angeles National Forest is basically the San Gabriel mountains. San Bernardino county small piece of Ventura County.

We are about 700,000 acres, private holdings, 750,000 acres. Talk about having to drive too far-- I don't know. We last clocked on our visitation estimate. It's a rather course-- estimate, 4.6 million annual visitors. That did come higher than Yosemite or Grand Canyon National Parks. We are a highly, highly visited forest being adjacent enter to urban mass of Los Angeles County.

I would say in general; this would be-- we are far more developed, far more concentrated in our recreational program than anything I've seen in CDD and maybe in BLM in general. So, and one interesting thing about that, I did work in the Palm Springs field office. And appreciated my time in BLM. BLM recreation planners, Forest Service generally does not because we fill like we are built south in our recreation. Management and operations. True recreation planning. That's an interesting, in the personnel side we manifest those differences.

We have a large engineering program right there in our local office. That's unique compared to other Federal Agencies. We've proud of that. Our engineers are a great bunch of people and maintain that large, developed facility footprint.

For the fee program, our days fees have been a consistent price across Southern California, Angeles, Los Padres all the way up to Monterey. San Bernardino is the east and down south-- that's \$5 day use pass and \$30 annual.

As far as the expanded amenity sites, one of the three types, that's what ours will be today. Increases in expanded amenity campgrounds, all campgrounds and no proposal for day fee increases.

What we're proud and hope you see value in it, we try to be consistent even price across the forest. Generally, these campgrounds are mostly at the same development scale, some larger than others. But we tried to go for that consistency. Jeremy will explain more, administering the program and the public visiting our sites. Grateful to be here. Look forward to hearing questions and feedback. With that I'll turn it over to Jeremy.

>> JEREMEY SUGDEN: Thank you again, I'll echo Justin's comments for the gratitude we have to come before and present the free proposal. We don't have a RAC available. So we've been working on this fee proposal for five years. Putting it together and we were getting to know, hey, when are we going to have the RAC available? We were finally able to work with the BLM to make this happen.

So just a little overview about the Forest Service as a whole. On the left is all of the Forest Service units in region five which is California and Hawaii. And then on the right we have the Angeles National Forest. You see we are divided into two districts, San Gabriel National Monument, and the Los Angeles district. We cover 700,000 acres. And we are the backyard to Los Angeles and depending where you draw your boundaries on the Los Angeles basin, that's 18.3 million people serve as their backyard. We are a heavy day use forest.

We are located within the Desert Advisory Council boundary map. You will see along the west edge there. Again, thank you for letting us be here. Next slide.

And we did talk about our national visitor use monitoring and the visitors we have to the Angeles National Forest. The forest received 4.5 million visitors in 2021. We do these surveys every five years. So in 2021 because of the pandemic, we didn't get the same level of detail or data that we collected. So mainly it was aggregate data.

As you can see our visitors are mainly for hiking, walking, viewing natural features and relaxing. And then I want to emphasize the fact we are a local forest, not a destination forest. Most of our visitors don't come from far away. On the pie chart on the left most of them come from west and 25 miles away, 47%. And people that come from 56 to 50 miles away, that's 33%. Add that up you're at 80% of our visitors come from less than 50 miles away to visit our forest. Next slide.

So just like the BLM, we did have public involvement and market analysis to come where we are for our fees. How we propose the recreation fee is determined based on the local market and the amenities available at the recreation site. The change in fees is intended to provide consistent recreation experiences across the forest. Proposing the new fees, the forest conducts-- cost of recreation opportunities offered in the private sector, federal agencies such as the National Park Service and the Bureau of Land Management.

Our market analysis reviewed a number of local sites to determine the fee. As noted in the report you had earlier, our local market is ranging from \$20 to \$30 for overnight use of campgrounds. For example, our nearest local state park is Chino Hills State Park which charges \$30 a night. And Joshua Tree National Park, \$20 a night. Angeles National Forest we have a concessionaire, a private company that has a permit to operate Forest Service owned facilities and they charge for their single campground, \$30 a night.

When selecting the fee we had two primary goals. One to increase revenue so that we continue to operate and maintain our sites. Second goal is reduce the amount time our staff spends counting money. All of these sites are very, remote but no cell service. We don't have many collection or electronic methods to collect fees. So it's all one dollar bills, 20-dollar bills. We bring it back to the office, spread it out, count the money. Currently all of our campgrounds are \$12 a night. There is no easy way to get \$12 in bills [Background Noise].

If you have an America the Beautiful pass or access pass it gives you 50 percent discount. You're at \$6. That why with this one, we're proposing \$20. It's the bill that comes out of the ATM. That is one of our primary motivators, also to increase the revenue. With that we had to do public involvement.

I'll go into it later in the presentation. We have public involvement in July 2024 through September 2024. It's 60 days, Forest Service policy. It's a little longer than 60 days, but our reasoning is our heavy use season is the holiday weekends 4th of July, Memorial Day and Labor Day are the days. We want to make sure those visiting the camp site saw our notes.

Next slide. Here is the list of the sites that we are planning to change the fees. We've got buck horn, chilao, coldbrook, Crystal lake, horse flats, manker flats, monte cristo campground, oak flat, southfork and Sycamore flat campground. You notice the top third or two-thirds of the list those are at \$12. Going up to \$20 as proposed. And the bottom are oak flat, Southfork, Sycamore Flat, lightning point are \$5. Originally, the local districts decided to administer them through our program which is the standard amenity fee of \$5. We are aiming to be consistent with the amenities provided.

Before we implement at those lower sites we need to install a fee, kiosk and amenities. But most of the core amenities are there. We try to be consistent across the forest.

In this proposal we have-- (away from mic). A site that got impacted by the station fire and closed for a while. And we're bringing it back online. We put a big investment into it this year. And we base that off the number of people that consider a picnic table in a number of sites. That's why you see for the sites they have individual picnic tables. We have different site sizes. Some can accommodate 36 people, some 45 people.

Here's a map of the sites. You'll see that they are spread across the forest. They are in a specific area. They are basically focused on the development level and where we need the management presence. In the top left corner, along I5. That's oak flat. The one with the three little tents that's Lightning Point. Working our way to the right, forest flat and high-country campgrounds along

the highway two corridor. And the 5-dollar campgrounds are on the north side there, and crystal lake in the middle, coldbrook in the middle....

As we mentioned earlier here are the \$20 campgrounds. Buckhorn is one of our most popular sites a site where you feel you're in the Sierras. It has wonderful large trees. And you can see, we've got Chilao down there, and we've got a backlog of different maintenance. You can see, we've got frost in our pavement this is what we plan with the fee. One keep the staff onboard and make improvements. All the fee sites we're promoting fee changes, the current five dollars have all the amenities in place that are required. Jump to the next slide.

Here's lightning point campground. Mentioned earlier, we're proposing for sites that have 36 people, \$80. Sites 45 people, \$100 a night. We just put a big investment with three brand new vault toilets, horse corrals, hitching post. It's a great site. And we're bringing it back online.

As Justin mentioned earlier, we have our day use fee program and it's across the Southern California forest. We are not touching that. We are leaving it the same for \$5 per day or annual pass for \$30 or two annuals for 35 with the second vehicle. We offer national fee free days for standard amenity site for Martin Luther King, Juneteenth, national get outdoors days..

Planned accomplishments. With this additional increase in funding, we plan to replace a lot of fire range, replace tables, pavement rehabilitation. Additional restroom structures, improve the can I crossing and-- increase the presence of personnel on the site and provide educational and recreational visitor information. One thing I want to point out in the last year we were successful in our hiring and able to boss interpret our recreation staff. Just like the BLM funds have depleted in what we got appropriated; we fund our staff with the fee dollars. All our staff also got a pay increase with the latest adjustment for the cost of living. So, we are trying to basically keep up with the Joneses. One thing I want to point out, we had in the last time we adjusted the campground fees, it's been \$12 since the mid-90s. Can you take \$12 and do the CPI inflation calculator. That gives us 25. We're not trying to price anyone out. And, we're trying to make our concessionaires still have a viable business. We're not trying to undercut anyone that's why we came up with \$20.

Here's a few examples of the work we've done over at FY23. We really like to leverage our fee dollars. And the picture of above there we have an Eagle Scout group that helped refurbish the horse flats fee station sign board. They provided the labor. We provided staff supervision and paint materials. We leveraged our funds and added to volunteers to get our work done.

We have a lot of toilets in the Angeles. So, we spend a lot of money on toilets. So last year we spent \$56,000 to pump toilets and have a contract to have a professional contractor to service the interiors of the building as well. And then we also installed 20 new fire rings -- installed bollard posts, staffed (inaudible) seven days a week. That's all with volunteers. We are learning the funds to get every ounce of use from the dollars that we can.

And two of our big projects for this year, FY'24 is install new toilets. One on the left got taken out by a car. So, we were able to replace that, been there for 30 years and no issues. Put boulders in place. The one on the right that's another one where we leveraged our partners. Our partners

with the National Forest foundation bought that toilet and used the fee dollars to pay for the transportation and install of that at the Blue Ridge trail. Very popular spot, it's outside of the community of Wrightwood. So about 7,000 feet elevation, I would say. Lots of snow in the winter. All of the Los Angeles basin flock to the mountains when they see the snow.

Public involvement actions. Public comment ran from July 1 to September 3, 2024, to catch our major visitor weekends. We posted on our forest website. Posted on Twitter and Facebook on July 2, 31, August 27 and September 3 we posted signs on the campgrounds impacted and replaced those as they got torn down, we had it in English and Spanish at our sites because a lot of our visitors only speak Spanish.

And then with the-- we also posted news releases in the Santa Clarita Signal, Antelope Valley press, San Gabriel valley tribune and picked up an article written on it. We posted in the *Federal Register* notice and published on August 1, 2024. Next slide, please.

We contacted all of our state and local official as well. For state and local officials, we contacted Governor Newsom, 5 California State Senator, 7 state assembly members, five Los Angeles board of supervisors, 45 city representatives from the surrounding communities that are adjacent or have connection with the forest and ten federally elected officials. And contacted our tribal communities that have connection with the forest. That was through our tribal Program Manager and we made every effort to make that out. Next slide, please.

Through the commenting period we accepted comments in a couple of different ways. One was you can email. You can call me. I was a collector of the comments. And we or you could come here and enter it with a story map tool. This allowed you to click on the site, enter the comment and move to the next site. That story map received 500 views. Let's see. Next slide.

So the forest received 52 comments total, 31 unique comments with 16 in support, 10 opposed. 4 with mixed responses, 1 asking question. 38 comments were submitted through the story map. And 21 being duplicates. We are not making changes based on comments received. And I will comment that on the post on social media they did get the traction and views. Our July 3 post as of about two weeks ago, it had 1,940 views. July 31 had 2,391 views. The August 27 had 2,022 views. September 3 had 1,340 views on X. We made that effort to get that out there.

Again, just want to thank you for having this opportunity to present this to the group. Ready for questions.

>>STOVIN: Is there any water at those camp sites?

>>SUGDEN: Yes. Water is one of the amenities that can be provided at the site but not required to charge an extended amenity fee. Some have water.

>> STOVIN: Okay. Running water?

>> SUGDEN: Running water.

>> STOVIN: That's a nice thing when you're camping. Not required but it's a nice thing.

>> SEASTRAND: And interesting pointed. Adding a water system with the fires we mentioned we were not at this time fill that water system back. That might be a future improvement that the fees can go to.

>>STOVIN: It could be really expensive.

>> SUGDEN: To tie on that, it's a really nice amenity but it's a recurring cost. It's considered public system, so we have to test them every single-- make sure that they meet water quality standards. It's not a one-time cost and pipes freeze, opening, starting.

>>HOLLIDAY: I want to comment on your presentation, what I read, where it's showing all the improvements you were going to make for the campground. I think that's important for fee request, to show what, I know we were raising these fees because the cost of living and everything. The cost goes up. But again, people would like to see that they are getting something new for their fees, if possible.

>> SUGDEN: Absolutely. We make every effort to get that money back in, whether it's supporting our staff that does the dirty work, cleaning the toilets all the time or putting a new toilet in. That's why we try to get that money back to the ground.

>>SEASTRAND: There seems to be a direct codirection how new the toilet is and the fee.

>> BANIS: Hi. Thank you for this. First thing I'm going to say, this is-- I enjoyed reading it. It's very well written. I have things like this language, overnight campers may spot seasonal constellation, planets and occasional shooting stars. Often stocked with rainbow trouts. Spectacular peaks of, or fishing in crystal lake. Making the epic view seem endless. 21 spacious sites of year-round tranquility. Fire rings to huddle around and cook those family meals. You see yourself there. I know it's kind of silly. But it really-- you can see it and you can see; gosh this one is different than this one which is different than this one. I have to say it was well written. Thank you for that.

I noticed we had the benefit of seeing the Cleveland National Forest proposal in previous meeting and I see this follows a similar template. I'm guessing that region five is probably working through the forest for this.

I would suggest going forward including a map with the template so that we could see where these are as we're reviewing it. It will be helpful. I can go on Google, see where they are. And I did. But it would have been helpful.

It's interesting to note how many of these sites are in the national monument. And I-- and you know you still see comments about, I don't mean this as an indictment on you guys. Lack of oversight become graffiti and trash filled party spot. Fires, graffiti damage to trees-- I just say this only because, the national monument is not a panacea for all your woes. It doesn't come with new truck load and train load of funding, you all of a sudden, this a national monument.

More money goes into the how and add signs and improvements, it's coming out of somewhere else. And speaking of that somewhere else, you know, I noticed on your map virtually all of the sites, all but one are east of 14 freeway. By the way, I live in the valley. Head of-- canyon and I

live a mile from the boundary, three miles crow drives-- and so bulkhead canyon is a Redwood travel route for me.

It's heartbreaking to see what happened to the campgrounds there. There used to be four, five beautiful campgrounds adjacent to the spring. One was across the street from the old oaks restaurant, since burned down. A couple of the campgrounds were at the south of the canyon where interpretive opportunities and heavy access and made for special needs visitors to be able to enjoy. And all of those have been abandoned. They've all been abandoned. Worse than abandoned. They have been a nuance. Being an urban forest, is different than, let's say beyond or places where you have to put in the commitment and jump in your car and goes for days.

These campgrounds you can get to just right out your front door practically. You're right in Pasadena, up the road. Unfortunately, it also can attract troublemakers and vandalism and things like that. So it's sad to see some of these beautiful infrastructure in the canyon that's been torched and burned and brick walls that are smashed up and graffiti all over. But I mean, it just-- if the campground is going to be decommissioned, it should be removed altogether so it doesn't keep attracting the unsavory elements to go in there after hours at night, drinking and hooliganism that can go on in there. These campgrounds are not coming back probably. It's heartbreaking to see that.

That said, I have a question, are some of these campgrounds RV or camping trailer accessible?

>> SUGDEN: Some of them are. But it really depends on, if you're talking about-- your new toy hauler RVs, no. But you can get there with the pickup. These campgrounds were designed in the 20s. Crystal Lake, you know it was originally by LA County who designed that campground. They are not designed for our current size of vehicles. We have some that have longer ones that can accommodate that.

>> BANIS: Good job with the public outreach and summary of comments. And I just-- I wish members of the public could hear the story and see the effects of sequestrations over the years and budgeting. This concept of we pay enough taxes to support this. We shouldn't have to pay more. It's a whole different world than it used to be. Wasn't more than a few decades ago where all of us citizens of this country paid to support these beautiful public lands. Whether we use them or not, now that burden has been shifted over the years to those who use this hem versus those who don't. I don't want to have a philosophical debate on that. People don't understand and don't see dwindling budgets, not only in real dollars, they're dwindling in terms of their value when compared to inflation and other costs.

I appreciate the public comments, feeling that they're already overtaxed and overburdened. But all in all, I think you had some very positive comments here. I see general public support for your proposal here. I think you did a good job in the outreach.

So thanks. If somebody else wants to move approval, I'm happy to defer. But being there's no motion on the table, I'm happy to make the motion again if somebody wants to second it. I don't mean to close comment. Just we have a motion on the table to discuss. That's all. thank you. Good job. Thank you.

>>STOVIN: I like to second the motion.

>> HAAS: The motion has been put forth by Randy and seconded by Ed. We have a moment for additional discussion if needed. Would any DAC members have a comment?

>> BANIS: Did somebody that follow-up? Are you shocked we were so easy on you?

>> [Laughter]

>> HAAS: All right. In that case, we are going to move forward with the voting as previously we will go through each category and each DAC member could vocally let us know if they yay or no.

>> HAAS: Ed Stovin?

>> STOVIN: Yay.

>> HAAS: Thank you, sir. Desirea is not with us. Desirea Haggard next member would be Joshua Martelli.

>> MARTELLI: Yay.

>> HAAS: Thank you, Josh. And Nathan Francis?

>> FRANCIS: Approved.

>> HAAS: Thank you sir. And Creed Stone?

>> STONE: Yes.

>> HAAS: Thank you. That includes category one. Category two, Jack Thompson?

>> THOMPSON: Yay.

>> HAAS: Thank you, Jack. I myself vote yes. Jennifer Henning?

>> HENNING: Yes.

>> HAAS: Thank you. Dick Holliday?

>> HOLLIDAY: Yes.

>> HAAS: Thank you. And Steven Reyes?

>> REYES: Yes.

>> HAAS: Thank you, sir. Moving to category three first we have Dawn Rowe

>> ROWE: Yes.

>> HAAS: Thank you, Dawn. Next we have Ann Kulikoff.

>> KULIKOFF: Yes.

>>HAAS: Thank you, Ann. And Terry McGlynn.

>> MCGLYNN: Yes.

>> HAAS: Thanks, Terry. And Bob Robinson?

>> ROBINSON: Yeah.

>> HAAS: And finally Mr. Randy Banis.

>> BANIS: Yes. Thank you.

>> HAAS: All right. Thank you. The yays are unanimous. And the motion is passed.

>> BANIS: Question for just a minute? So I'm guessing that this is a region five process going on. I'm expecting we'll be called upon to look at others. I think I've seen Los Padres that the forest has put on proposal. I know they're looking at a snow play area parking fee because of the craziness that goes on up there when the snow comes. Is there a heads up about any others that we may be seeing in the coming months?

>> SUGDEN: The San Bernardino National Forest campground and fee proposals.

>> BANIS: Very good. Thank you.

>> REYES: One question for the DAC and looking at the pap. Los Padres may foul fall outside your advisory.

>> BANIS: Probably central California RAC. Thank you. Sorry about that. Bakersfield. Yeah, good call.

>> SUGDEN: Thank you very much for the time and for approving our request.

>> SEASTRAND: Really appreciate it. [APPLAUSE]

>> HAAS: Thank you very much, everyone. How about an early break for lunch? We will reconvene at 1:30 PM. And thank you.

>> (Break for lunch).

>> recording in progress.

>>HAAS: Welcome back, everyone. Is this thing on? All right. We are ready to reconvene, it is 1:30. And we are going to turn it over to Shelly for CDD reports and overviews.

>> LYNCH: So we'll go through district and field office and fire overviews. First, I'd like to announce that this is Jack Thompson's last DAC meeting.

>> What?

>> LYNCH: His tenure expires I believe in February. Right? And our next meeting is in April. March. Thank you, Jack, for your time on the DAC.

>>THOMPSON: Absolutely, thanks a lot.

>> LYNCH: Yep. Also, I'm sure it's not the last we'll be working together. We will be voting on a new Chairperson later this afternoon. Thanks to Hans for serving as our chair for the year.

A couple of district level updates on staffing, my deputy district manager resigned in October. And so that, I just got the list of names. We readvertised that position. And I got a list of names, I think, yesterday. So, I'll be starting interviews to backfill that position.

The resources, supervisor position, so that's Erin McConnell, she supervised biologists and ologists in the District Office, that job announcement closes on December 12. And then we have the GIS Southern California Edison supervisor position that just closed. I'm expecting to get that list soon. And the-- position, we're updating the position description behind Brandon. Once we get that updated, we'll go out with that announcement to backfill behind Brandon. And then just a brief, I'm not going to go into details, OLES is the office of law enforcement and safety.

So they're the law enforcement branch in the BLM. And it's part of the Department of Interior law enforcement review and. And they did a big review at that level, the department level. So even above the BLM there were recommendations that came out of that review that was in concert with the President's Executive Order around law enforcement.

And they had a handful of recommendations that came out of that review. One of the recommendations is that law enforcement folks need to report to law enforcement. So, we're a little different in CDD because we have so many law enforcement officers. I think we have 45 when we're fully staffed. We have to have subordinated supervises. Our law enforcement report to law enforcement supervisor or a field office chief.

That's not the case in every field office with other field offices they may not, even districts, some of the states they don't have nearly as many rangers as we do. A lot of the rangers would report to a field manager.

As you can imagine there is not only some liability with that. But it also, they identified issues with that from a law enforcement perspective because they're not report to go a law enforcement supervisor. Part of that, long story short is we had to reorganize the whole BLM had to reorganize our law enforcement structure so that law enforcement were reporting to law enforcement. The only change in CDD, is we added a district chief ranger position. So what that does is it will remove law enforcement reporting to the field offices and pulls it to the district.

So that adds more responsibility to my plate because I oversee fire and now, I have the whole law enforcement program. We will hire a district chief ranger who will supervise the five office field office chiefs. It's not going to change the relationship with the rangers in the field offices. We have to work or logistics like budget and funding and whose paying for the vehicles and that stuff. But they are going to be moving, once we fill that position, the law enforcement will be moving to the district. So anyway, that position description just got back from classification. I think that announcement is going out next week. That will be open, and we'll hopefully fill that position.

>> BANIS: So Marc, now I call Shelly, right?

>>STAMER: Operationally we're not going to change.

>> BANIS: All right. [Laughter].

>> LYNCH: And district ranger position will be-- [Background Noise]. So let's see. Budgeting, we're like Joe said, we're expecting budget continued budget increases. So we're planning for that which usually means we can't fill positions. We have to strategize which vacancies are kind of critical to moving things forward. We need all the positions, but we have to focus on which ones are critical.

And like Joe mentioned our priorities will continue staffing where we can. And then congressional requirements. We heard yesterday that Amargosa Wild and Scenic River plans-- we have some other ones that we have congressional timelines that we are required to meet to get those done. Those will continue to be our priorities. Any questions on that? The district report out? Okay. We'll move to Barstow.

>> MARC STAMER: Okay. Thank you all. I was thinking about our visit yesterday in the field trip. I think, we try to go over the common themes that we had in each of the different stops. I hope everyone of the trip heard loud and clear that the ability to collaborate in that partnership that we have with all the different-- NGOs and partners and everybody else we work with to be successful. That partnership and land stewardship is critical. To me that was one of the biggest things I thought about, common theme. Yesterday at each of the stops.

And I think to Shelly, she was talking about as far as we see these challenges sometimes with budgets in the federal agency, those partnerships, those relationships become even more important for us to be successful in managing this landscape for the taxpayers. In that case, I want to say thank you. Without the partnerships, I don't think we can do the job we're doing. I know we couldn't.

Moving on, for some staffing, key vacancies right now, the deputy field position is still vacant. My supervisory law enforcement position is vacant. We have a new Doc—who retired last year. Chief Perez is in that position now, doing a great job. And really just change in leadership, he's-- folks are kind of moving forward and getting out there. So, he's really pulling that team together in a different way.

Our planning environmental coordinator position, that's the one that does that oversees the stuff has been vacant for over a year now. Naturally kind of-- as far as just having folks, not just our office that's experiencing that. I think there's four out of the five offices including the District Office. That position, we're hoping to get that filled here soon and looking for that capacity to increase or at least to have presence there.

We also have a visitor center coordinator position that at some point want to move forward. It's currently vacant. Help us get our discovery center open and work intently with the visitor center at El Mirage as well. And short two planners and park rangers. That is a challenge. But AJ's doing a good job working with the team he has and trying to be successful, I think.

The two, we do have two realty specialist, started in March, April-ish. So brand new. Iso is a volunteer, intern with us for a while. She had experience being intern and working in the program. The reason I bring that up, coming in January, they are both going to a training for reality specialist, a six-week training. We're forcing to get them in it. But for those six weeks, they're only going to be focusing on that training.

So our right-of-way for those things, there's going to be impacts there while they're focusing on the training which is important for them to continue their progression. Sharing that for an FYI.

I think, some of the activity, the Rasor area, we're working with the contractor on the development of our management plan for Rasor. That's just in the draft stages, working on that. At El Mirage, Randy, I think AJ said the HVAC has been installed. That's a big project. One of the things we continue to deal with in El Mirage is water theft. And I think we're seeing that, we have a meeting across parts of the--

>> ROWE: You need to, unfortunately.

>> The hydrant stuff as well. So it's interesting. Valley, we have recently three large clean ups. Couple of volunteers did help up. Community wash group. This is interesting. 247, there's a bunch of graffiti. One of the folks that sprayed the graffiti happened to put their social media on. And turns out the Friends of Johnson Valley watch group were able to contact the Marines and let them know. Hey, we think one of your folks may have done this. As a result we had 15 volunteer marines come out and help us remove the graffiti and volunteers as well. Again, partnerships. Take advantage of the opportunity.

We also have another clean up out there with Positional Projects made out of 75 volunteers. Stoddard valley, we have annually clean Desert comes out. Clean up for us. And Cal 300 folks as well, helping up with clean ups that have been done.

Moving forward with SRPs as we move into the new calendar year, folks are aware, what's ahead of us. Every weekend we're having one or two different SRPs. The big event we're going to be staffing Dumont Dunes for Martin Luther King. Then rolling into King of the Hammers in January February, And then bookend that with President's day holiday. Staff's going to be pretty tied up here come January into February with part of activity between the two holidays.

Let's see. For grants, I think Julie reported out. As of right now we were awarded safety and education grant. Talked about that yesterday. And then also our law enforcement grants. Unfortunately we didn't get our ground operations grant. And so we're going to be trying to get creative and how we can move forward without those grants.

I think the only other thing as of yesterday we've been working on a direct land sell with northern Santa Fe, 30 acres of land west and north of the Barstow area. And that land was all basically surrounded, surrounding lands by it was owned by the railroad. This is to support the Barstow international gateway project which is a big rail hub. Idea is get it off loaded, shipped to Barstow, unload, resort repackage the rails and send it out to the country. This is a key project for that type of infrastructure. And so as of yesterday we posted the, went live on E planning, the

EA, it's live for 30 days. And depending how that goes the goal the first week of the year we move forward. That's the game plan there.

Our Amargosa Wild and Scenic River comprehensive management plan, we talked about this yesterday. CRP. We're developing that draft and hope to get that out quick or soon. And the other big couple of that we're working on is the-- Shoshone land transfer came to us due to homeland act of 2000. This has been for a while. We've been making progress in this that we now have the BIA to the table. That's with the lands that go to tribal, going to BIA. Federal to federal. BIA has gone through this process before. We are happy we got traction and moving forward with that project as well. Concurrently working with the Tribe on a right of way for a comms site to support their needs in Death Valley.

And then finally the St. Cloud mining project that's been out on the street. We're finishing the response to comments and hoping to get a final decision out here in the next quarter or so. That's exploratory drilling. It's about 43 holes, 200 feet deep each, in the Amargosa. We heard noise, conversation about that yesterday. But it's less than an acre in total disturbance. That the other project that's there.

One of the things that I wanted to just throw out to the group is, these are the opportunities and conversations we had about that Joe said on Friday when we're connected and talking with each. Is the thought process of TRT, technical review teams. But the idea of maybe, something I'm asking the DAC to think about. What would it look like to have subgroups stood out. There used to be a Dumont subgroup. There was one for El Centro. Idea, trying to get those back so we can work intently throughout the year with subgroups.

Hearing Josh talk about the idea of having Polaris and other companies come to the table and support funding, it's in their interest, rider education and safety that to me just screams subgroup working group with all these different companies that are providing the equipment that we need. I'm putting that out there as a closing for folks to think about. I think there will be value added to getting that effort back out. That's it for me. I want to say, thanks for the collaborative effort. Ed?

>> STOVIN: A couple of quick questions. You mentioned a variety of staffing positions. Are all those currently being advertised?

>> STAMER: No. The only ones I'm actively working on is the supervisory law enforcement ranger and our planning and environmental coordinator. All the other ones, deputy, and others, we are kind of waiting and just right now.

>>STOVIN: You need approval to go with those?

>> STAMER: We needs a lot of things. It's budget concerns to deal with the staffing. It's capacity when we're working with our human resources to get through the work to get those jobs advertised and announced and moved forward. Not only across the field office and CDD but across the state as well.

>>STOVIN: You're limping. You barely can operate with that many holes in your lineup. You said water theft. How is water stolen? Are they filling tankers or water bottles?

>> STAMER: I don't know if we know. In our case, they're cutting locks off. You know what they're doing?

>> BANIS: They cut the lock off the fence and bring in like a water buffalo or water truck. And then they destroy the tap. And they hookup their own hoses, they fill up and move. They disconnect and run off. Sometimes--

>> STOVIN: Run away with a tank of water?

>> BANIS: Or pickup truck with the water glider in back of it. Water theft was in generally more prevalent when the illegal cannabis grows were proliferating, had problems in El Mirage, inside the OHV park on private property. And the water trucks would cut the fence and drive in.

But now people have installed more security on their water sources. And so, the water thefts are sort of hitting the more easy targets like at El Mirage because there's so much private property inside the area. It is open 24/7. The gates are open. And so most recent case, we're fortunate that the thief accidentally dropped his wallet on the site. So that provided us a little bit of a clue for law enforcement to chase that one down.

But it does happen, the trouble is normally the repairs to the tank. But it's also, they'll disconnect and let the water run. So you end up with kind of a mess of run off and you know what happens when water runs in the Desert on dirt. It creates a cleanup mess for us.

>> STOVIN: Is that ground water?

>> BANIS: It's part of the well. We have a well that fills the tank. And the tank provides water for operations, also depending on where the tank is, it can provide water for the facility, the visitor center itself. But we're the biggest users of that particular tank, by we, Friends of El Mirage, because we use water to keep dust down when we're doing grading and working in the dirt. We need that water.

Also, we use a lot of water on the lakebed because the lake bed develops cracks and holes. And the way that we fix those holes is that we remove encroaching weeds that are in the way of the operation. We remove those weeds. We collect the material that's underneath those sumacs of weeds. The that is clay that can fix the surface. We sift it to get the seeds out, the sticks and stems and all the stuff out of them. And we have pipe of material that we haul to the lakebed and fill the cracks and use the water to compact it down. We have water needs as well. It's generally how water gets taken.

>> STOVIN: Two more quick questions. The tagger was someone from the service?

>> STAMER: Yeah.

>>STOVIN: Oh, my God.

>>STAMER: They're young. Right?

>> STOVIN: The brightest and--

>> [Speakers Overlapping]

>> STOVIN: So your ground operations grant, was it completely denied?

>>STAMER: Yeah.

>>STOVIN: I comment on grants, and I've commented on the district grants for many years. And I don't look at the awards. I just-- telling the people what I think. But I never heard of, I don't know, we have half a million or something and you get nothing? I mean, your score, we know-- the grants are scored so you do different things, and you get points. You know going in about where you stand. And you would imagine you'd go if, thinking you're going to get something.

>> STAMER: Three years ago -- things that we're seeing. The number of requests, grants, people applying for grants now is increasing. And the amount the funding the state has is decreasing. The other part is three years ago, I think it was, we went into bad standing. The timing of when that happened, the grant language said -- the timing has now hit us for three years but turns out it's two grant cycles. Had we had ten points for not being in good standing, we would have been middle of the pack. We scored better this year. That's part of the challenge that we're having. We're going to continue to re-evaluate our grant submissions to be competitive. And next year we'll be in good standing. We're also, you know, the reality is, going back to partnerships, looking at funding opportunities, other grants out there. We submitted RTP grant, that's a way out.

>>STOVIN: That's the same with managing people. It is. Maybe they can change hats and look objectively. But I wonder.

>> STAMER: It's just-- it's part of what we work with. And state parks is doing what they need to be able to do to manage administrative programs. Yeah.

>> STOVIN: Thanks, that's all I have.

>> HOLLIDAY: I would like to say, too, I would suggest, if you get with Matt and figure out a way to get these back work. They really do provide, we found, the DAC subgroup for-- TRT years ago, I think we provided a lot of comment back to management. But also, we learned a lot and got a lot of feedback from visitors getting out. [inaudible].

>>STAMER: Thank you. Appreciate it.

>> STOVIN: I was on the dunes subgroup for six years before I became a member of this group. When I hit this group, I had a lot of seasoning from that group and understanding that structure and the dialogue. So, I would encourage the formation of those maybe to bring up other people to be active in this group in the future.

>>STAMER: Thank you.

>> LYNCH: Okay. Matt, you're up.

>> LOHR: Nice. We've within able to hire a couple of people. Wildlife biologist, we hired two park rangers and another one on our way. Park ranger like Alex. Made two job offers to LE rangers one from Washington State and one from Forest Service. They've accepted.

A lot of positions. The next two weeks, we have applications through HR to interview for a lead park ranger, geologist, and one LE supervising ranger, one LE chief ranger, {inaudible} and maintenance worker. Those are going to happen the next couple of weeks to get them hired before the change of administration. We have mapped out-- but we mapped that out so we work with multiple field offices here. I want to thank the field offices helping us out so get these positions hired. With staffing, we are renegotiating a contract with Sequoia National Park. A lot of staff to save ISDRA funds, we send staff out to fires and national parks during the summer. We are looking at renegotiating the contract and getting field offices on especially with our MLR federal dollars that we can have our staff that they can work 50 weeks out of the 52 weeks.

We received our OHV grants and wrapping up the 2024 reports. When 2024 budget year actuals is back online. We will finish that up. We have one more to submit.

So, outreach of the field office is we had a great meeting with the CHP the Sheriff's office and LE rangers. The past year, CHP did not want to take acts of report in Winterhaven or El Centro field office. We met with them. We want to take ASA. Now they're taking the accident reports for DUI or collision accidents. We had stents there a few weeks ago, we want to thank Dave Kuskie for helping us push that through with state office. Now we met-- CHP is taking back on that duty.

Bunch of thank you Christmas letters went out for me. We have an amazing partnership with them. They applied for OHV grants seamlessly together. Homeland Security, border patrol and FBI to help out on our events. The other ones, they don't bill to our charge codes. That's them getting additional training to support our team. They want to be out there. Hey, you're here on Thanksgiving Day, saying I want to learn. The thank you letters are on the way out. In January 1, we brought in a new archaeologist. We have 26 tribes in our El Centro field office. A letter saying, we're here, let's talk before we go to government-to-government. Reengaging with our new archaeologist. We said earlier, Halloween, camp RZR- 22%, Thanksgiving was 9%. We had a meeting with the Imperial County Sheriff's office and ASA how we can do safety classes. Shelly touched on that. We need to do more safety classes. We're continuing the partnership after the new year, in dunes, see if there's funding available through Yamaha, Polaris, state parks, etc.

We just finished up a bi-monthly meeting with Imperial County planning department-- also with IID district on coordinating projects. We have geothermal connectivity. We have projects, 65% of the county land is on BLM. So working closely with the county. We're meeting with the county CO to talk about a few things. One we're working with Paul over in fire to get an MOU with the fire department, the county fire department. I'll be meeting with CO to talk about that and making sure we're in coordination, we had projects start with the county but better coordinating those. Great partnership with Imperial County.

Last in the new year, I'll be meeting with the two county supervisors. Introduce ourselves. Going out, one thing we want to invest this year is McCain valley in eastern San Diego. A couple of things are happening. This project I'm talking about is before we had our-- going to bid with the Lark canyon campground and water system upgrades. We hope to have those out this spring and start next fall. Our staff is working close to fire and will be reaching out to our nonprofits

including Ed's group, San Diego Off-Road Coalition how we can invest more. It's getting more use. We're seeing more people out there when there used to be ten cars on the weekend, there's 30, 40.

We're going to be pulling out public meetings to meet the public out there, probably the fire station or Jacumba senior center to have a discussion on what the needs are. That's exciting.

We're working with SWRA with state parks on MOU. They manage part of the acreage. We have about 40,000 acres in the park is almost land. One thing we are looking at is update the now and-- dedicate lands to state parks. That's a two-to-three-year process. We are in communication with state park office, Imperial County, and BLM.

We're working with the military, the Navy and Marine Corps on bombing ranges-- there's ranges by [inaudible] field. We're working on updating for the use and other parks—Salton Sea solar, if you're familiar 86 as you're going out of town towards palm desert on independent I don't there's a border checkpoint. In that area is a new solar project announced. We're having our second meeting with them on January 22 at the chamber of commerce. We have Perkins Solar which is, if you're going towards Yuma, on your right-hand to the border that's another project. And finishing up cultural resources and I'll be doing government-to-government with them soon. Another big project is Mesquite Mine, if you're familiar with that, that's just past Glamis, called Rainbow east exploration project. Five acres. We'll kick off the project recently and we have a project manager for district so we're rolling with that project. Just a few things for El Centro.

>> HOLLIDAY: As far as McCain valley, I'm the treasurer for the group-- [inaudible]. We have 50K that was donated for that area. Ashley was-- they pay us-- [inaudible]. They pay us for not complaining about the wind farm. They made us an original amount of \$60,000. They pay us 13K every year.

>> LOHR: So yeah, you just put in a water well for our fire.

>>HOLLIDAY: I just did that. So, if there's any other things like that, contact our-- from D37. He's the president. I'm just the Treasurer. We like to get rid of that money because obviously it was paid for things that McCain Valley, or any changes.

>> LOHR: So for the McCain valley, there may be somebody that we-- we'll definitely invite you to the public meetings we have in Jacumba-- I'll get that information from you for Jerry. Thank you.

>> STOVIN: Thank you for all the good work you're doing. I don't see anything to complain about which is awesome. [LAUGHTER] We'll talk later. There had been a push to make an off-highway vehicle bridge over the railroad tracks in the east side of sand dunes. Is there any updates, anybody want it help us with that?

>>LOHR: So, I think I sent an email back to the magistrate involved in that. Thank you. We can't do this; we don't have money to maintain that. We're not, we're not built to maintain that type of infrastructure and cost. Kind of every two months or six months it pops up again. I can

keep you posted as that comes up again. I think our solicitor wrote a letter saying we're not interested in owning it or maintaining it.

>> HOLLIDAY: Following that the public utilities commission, specified that anything goes in there, it has to be built, maintained, and insured by a public agency. Which means the BLM or Cal Trans or-- that's probably not going to happen.

>> LOHR: So, we'll see. Our solicitor reached out to them and let them know we're not interested.

>> HOLLIDAY: The county it I put together a proposal. They had a study done and had four alternatives. And they have--

>> STOVIN: County public transportation commission?

>> HOLLIDAY: Yeah.

>>STOVIN: For those of you who don't know what I'm talking about, the Imperial Sand Dunes the eastern border is a railroad line. And on the other side of the railroad line there's trails that go all the way to the end of the state, to the Colorado River. OHV trails. You can't get there from there. There's no legal way off-highway vehicles can cross these railroad tracks. They used to go under at wash 10, there was a bridge, and the bridge is still there and dug out and people so go through. There's a place called-- bar and restaurant that people go to. I believe the railroad added sand to wash 10 so no one can go through there.

And it's a problem. People have tried going over the tracks and there have been fatalities where the train hit some people. There is highway 78, and you could go like up on the highway and around. That's not legal on OHV. It's a problem. The community would like to be able to go back and forth. And there's not really a solution. Apparently, an agency needs to own the way to go from one side to the other. And there's been a proposal, like there could be a bridge. There could be what they call an at grade way to go over by highway 78 where they can make it wider and have the bars and work that out. Or there could be just a bridge. I think some of you the Herman Sider (?) bridge which is down by Gordon's well there's an off-road bridge where you can drive an off-road vehicle from highway 8 from the south to north dunes. That exists and there's a precedent.

But for a way, whichever way it has to be an agency would have to own it including the liability and the maintenance. And nobody really wants to own it. It's a problem. I'm wondering if there's anything going on?

>> LOHR: We're not able to maintain a bridge and a road.

>> STOVIN: Some people have said you should do it. But I don't see that.

>>HOLLIDAY: I'll give you background in you're interested about the bridge. The bridge needs to go under-- the gentleman that owns, Mr. Gordon-- portman-- he got permission from the railroad to dig out one of the bridges. And that railroad went down there. They had their engineers go down and looked at it and decided it was safe to do that, dig it out. He kept it clean.

When he died, they couldn't find that agreement and the railroad got called-- different railroad company bought it and didn't want anything to do with that. So, they can't do that.

They had crossings maintenance crossings across the bridge you could use to go across with all the different liabilities that have happened with people getting hurt on the railroad they have closed those maintenance roads; they're chained off so you can't use them anymore. Some people think they can out those back, and they won't. [inaudible]. They won't have anything to do with it.

>> PHIL DESENZE: Any bridge or underpassing now has to be in compliance with DOT standards because they're expensive and safety, like it's very much cost prohibitive. It's impossible. Walking bridge-- [Speakers Overlapping]

>> HOLLIDAY: It has to be big enough for a vehicle to pass on. Huge bridge.

>>LOHR: I'll bring up the county CO and see what they're moving forward with Cal Trans. That's their lineup operation remarks. That's my report.

>> HOLLIDAY: Railroad has always said, somebody else puts in and doesn't affect us. Fine for trains to go under. Shouldn't say they don't care. They're double tracking in that area so that adds complexity into it.

>> LOHR: CO of Cal Trans, I'm meeting with them in a couple of weeks. Thank you.

>> LYLNCH: Moving onto Needles.

>> SABRINA BICE: Few updates today. But I will start with the Mojave National Monument. Our office is actively working on the monument plan. Our staff just cleaning up loose ends while we await that draft from the contractor. Hopefully soon. Overall preparing our team for the internal review of that draft.

I'm happy to be reaching out with partners interest groups to schedule some event that provide that support that has been missing in the vacancy for any ongoing events and educational opportunities within the monument. And educating about the monument as well.

I'm happy to kind of touch on our latest project. Really early in the works, working with San Bernardino County, Route 66 association and other partners to participate in the 100-anniversary celebration of Route 66 which we all know runs through that monument. More to come on that.

A few updates we do have some solar applications that's to the DAC report that was submitted. We had one update with Equinox in [inaudible] Valley. Waiting on a district project manager assignment for that and cost recovery proposal. We're waiting for the proponent. We also did not receive our grand OPs for Needles this year. We did receive our law enforcement grant and had our safety and educational grant extended an additional year. Last year's grant through this year.

We have various SRPs that our office is working on. And then as far as personnel updates, we have a vacant law enforcement ranger position, admin assistant, maintenance grade 8. And then a Mojave trail national monument natural resource specialist. We have a long tenure retiring, served 19 years. We'll be sad to see him go. He leaves December 31.

We are also on the district announcement for the environmental planning NEPA coordinator which was advertised and recently closed. And the Mojave trail national monument manager is wrapping up the hiring process next week. That is it.

>> LYNCH: Questions for Sabrina?

>>REYES: I just like to thank Sabrina, my wife is a teacher in the unified school district, field trip to the Amboy crater. That's a big thank you from us.

>> STOVIN: So that Mojave trails national monument grant bees management plan is about to be released?

>> BICE: It's for internal review.

>> STOVIN: For the public? months?

>> BICE: So with the tentative schedule right now, obviously things can change, we are looking for a review late March early April. Public review, late April, early May.

>> LYNCH: Okay. (away from mic). Okay. Brandon. Palm Springs office.

>> BRANDON ANDERSON: Hiring, successes and woes. We were able to fill four positions, including our deputy field manager. Dan Kasang, he's a long time BLMer in Palm Springs. He's the second in charge in Palm Springs. We were able to fill our admin officer, a natural resource specialist and then we made a move on one of our law enforcement agents, when they took another job. We are going to have two rangers out in San Diego for safety and a lot of the issues we're running into.

On the vacancy side, right now Palm Springs has nine vacancies. That's about 21 percent of our office is vacant. We have two positions that we're looking to fill. One is the AFM for the recreation and the other one is the planner. Depending upon what plan it is we get and the AFM for recreation, it's too early to tell. I think we're moving forward on those two positions, but we still have the seven other vacancies outside of that.

So, kind of moving into the monuments on the staffing issue. Our visitor center, we made the decision to keep it open in the season for three days. That's for the Santa Rosa San Jacinto National Monument - we traditionally have had seven people working in that monument but between the BLM and the Forest Service right now we have three people that are staff within the monument, one being a Forest Service and two with BLM. With those three people we're trying to keep the visitor center as open as we can. Right now, it's Friday through Sunday. Which traditionally we had been open seven days a week.

We're struggling a little bit there but that's not to say we don't have some successes. We just had a public lands day in the Santa Rosa San Jacinto Mountains National Monument. We were able to do clean up and do planting within the monument and visitor center campus. We had about 50 or so volunteers come out and help.

On the continuing in the Santa Rosas, we are doing a fencing project with partners out near Snow Creek and Whitney point. There are some fencings that has been installed back in the early

2000s that we're repairing and installing to keep OHV out of the ACEC and areas off limits to OHV. On the Sand to Snow National Monument- we have the wild and scenic river for Whitewater. Forest Service is going through their objection period for the plan itself. So the objection period started on the 11th of November, running through the 23rd of December.

I think we're anticipating a decision on that plan sometime in 2025, pending any other objections or processes that the Forest Service needs to complete.

We had another public land day out in the Mecca Day Wilderness Area. We took out about 10 to 15 truckloads of trash and disbar badge from the area. We had 50 people come out to assist. I think we're going to try to continue those efforts out there because it that was the first clean up that we had in over ten years. And there's I think trash, when you have a pileup of trash, you get more trash. We will try to continue that the next couple of years to clean up that area. That was a good outcome.

And lastly on the Santa Rosas, we're working towards our 25th anniversary next October. We're trying to get a good celebration. 20th anniversary was spoiled by COVID so going back on the 25th.

On the land, mineral side of things, the Morongo communication site, we closed our comment period. We're going through the comments right now. What we're going to be doing is recessing and working with the applicant to address the concerns we heard from the community and looking whether or not there are additional sites. Circle back that first quarter of 2025 with any revisions.

On the MOMAC or master agreement that we had, the master operation maintenance and consolidation plan for Southern California Edison is compiling rights and ways they have within the four field offices into two per office. We have been consulting with the Tribes on that and working on identifying where their roads that they're using for utilities. So I think we're targeted to have a decision sometime in the last part of next year or early 2026 for that project.

And then on the solar front we have the Easley solar. We made a decision yesterday approving the Easley solar project that's 390-megawatt solar with battery storage. They're going to be working on fencing and the first part of 2025. And then the next project we're working internally on the Sapphire solar project, the internal reviews with the anticipated decision sometime later this month or early 2025.

And then lastly, so on the Dos Palmas, we had the fire, we have been working diligently on repairing the infrastructures that were damaged through that fire. On the BLM side its completed. We were able to get \$150,000 to continue the repairs on the private land portion of that. That work is it scheduled for later this, in December and into January. And then the reports are coming back that Dos Palmas and the damage done by the fire, the plants are coming back pretty well. So in terms of an escape fire, it really did a lot of benefit. We were planning for the lands to burn during the escape. We had planted in the future. And so it's coming back pretty nicely. And I think everybody is pretty excited that the work that we're able to do and the money coming

back in, investing into the infrastructure. So thankfully the pupfish in the area they weren't impacted at all by the fires. That's the report.

>> LYNCH: Questions for Brandon?

>> STOVIN: You mentioned briefly issues in San Diego. DAC members, I live in San Diego. And Palm Springs manages eastern Riverside County and a little portion of southwest San Diego County which is different than El Centro, has some eastern San Diego County. Can you want to expand on issues? Do you want to talk privately?

>> ANDERSON: I mean a lot of it is – Otay Mountains. There is activities there, from fire to coordination with border patrol. We have their isolated parcels that are remote, remote from the larger Palm Springs office. So, the reason we pushed another officer in that area is one, for safety reasons and two just that's where a lot of the calls that's we were getting in and the coordination with border patrol.

>> STOVIN: Do you have an office? You don't have an office in San Diego, do you?

>> ANDERSON: We are currently partnering with California Department of Fish & Wildlife Service with Fish and Wildlife Service in Rancho Cucamonga - there is a facility that they own there that we have two offices that we use.

>> STOVIN: Nice. I didn't realize that. I think it's been two years since Homeland Security asked for a gate to be closed. And Otay mountain truck trail at—Pio Pico campground. That hurt me because that's the place I go off-roading.

They said it was a temporary closure which usually means less than six months. I think it's been two years or three years. My organization had, we did a cleanup on national lands day on Otay Mountain. I talked to Dan Kasang and wanted us to do more of them. And my people didn't want to do anything if we didn't have access to the mountain. There are two ways to get in there. The West Side, campground and another way in farther to the east. Valley road. And what's interesting to me is I went down there and by the gate is locked, the fence right next to it is removed, a ten-foot section. As if it wasn't. Maybe I need to talk to Homeland Security and say, look, you guys obviously don't care. Why don't we just open it?

People walk across the border and getting picked up by bad guys and driving out to wherever they go. There have been chases and a fatality. That's why they justified closing it. It annoys me. I like to go out there legally and enjoy the land. If you have problems, if you can use help outside the agency. All right. Thank you.

>> BANIS: Not long ago there was an EA published for a staging area and campground in the Meccacopia hills area and ended up expiring. I think that was going to be put back on the table. I'm not sure--

>> ANDERSON: We went out for initial public comment not on the EA itself. We have not prepared an EA. We received feedback from the general public on the need and desire. And then we received a grant to do some initial planning. So doing soil surveys and things like that or

working on closing out that. Until we get funding we're not looking to pursue the EA just yet until we get funding. That's something that's a Presidential priority.

>> STOVIN: Thanks for keeping that on a burner. Thank you.

>> LYNCH: Any other questions for Brandon? Ok, Ridgecrest, Phil?

>> DESENZE: I think I got a chance to meet and says hello to almost all of you yesterday. Not everybody. A little bit about myself, this is my first DAC, first RAC meeting of any kind. I spent the past eight years working in California as a line officer District Ranger for the Forest Service all around the Ridgecrest field office, really the past six months the Inyo, white mountain, and mount whitney. And started out in Sequoia, Kern River, Angeles as a public affairs officer and a few months on San Bernardino and San Jacinto ranger district in Idlewild.

So, it's interesting coming to a new agency and seeing a lot of the same or similar issues, really a little bit of everything. But with a different emphasis and set of challenges around each of the issues. I found in all three months in the job that wild horse and burros, OHV and mining and energy development are the big three. And they look different over there on the Forest Service things. But that's why I came here. Work on issues like that that I hadn't had an opportunity there. I'll hit on those, the wild horse and burro. They have interactions with resources, grazing, wildlife, archaeology, wilderness and that one that I don't have the experience, I'm slowly getting there is the military. and all these issues come into play with the base.

That's definitely where I have a large learning curve. And I'm working to get up to speed there. On the wild horse and burro side, we have a thousand animals-- that's where our staffing is are. We have an immense staffing challenges. But if anybody's interested, I have so many animals available. And I need help to get those out and to do the gatherings in the landscape that I've been waiting on.

Hope to do that in October. OHV, yeah, works different than the Forest Service. I was out there last week, the law enforcement folks-- I'm hearing about the issues. We have open areas. We have over 2500 miles of designated trail as well and over 100,000 acres of open areas spread in three different spots. We are fortunate to be awarded \$2 million in OHV grants. We have a great program through law enforcement and recreation folks.

So, and all five categories, planning, restoration, education, law enforcement and ground ops. Ground ops-- we're working with the state to get that rectified. So, we have released \$1.3 million of those dollars and implementing those in the next year and rectify the issues. We're working through it.

And yeah, on the mining energy development we have solar. Nothing like Brandon here. But we may have a chance to look at that with our wind as well and energy storage. The dam at AOE is under construction, those types of things out there. On the mining and mineral side, you see in the report we submitted in particular the EIS currently in development from Mojave precious mineral, KZ Gold is their Canadian corporation name. Precious minerals, United States affiliate.

We have a field trip next Wednesday; many you may have heard. If you want to spend a long day with us in the field in altitude at 6:30AM. I can give that information to you if you're interested. I know Bob is going to be there. A lot of our public land round table folks and Tribal folks and the CEO of the company will be there as well to meet with us. That will be my first time-out there. That should be interesting. We hope to have the decision by the end of next year with the EIS with the new administration. A lot of briefings and can slow things down. May speed things up. I'm not sure.

So that's the big stuff that's happening in the field office. But what I came into is interesting because over 25% of our position's vacant and folks that have left are archaeologist, biologists and environmental coordinator.

Fortunately, with Shelly's help and the fellow managers we're getting some positions filled. Biologists, two positions vacant working to fill one. We have two people to pick from. Hopefully one of the ones we want for the job is qualified. Wild fish and Burro facility-- administrative assistant, front desk manages a lot of the paperwork and the adoptions. And then manager for the facility because right now one of my assistant field managers is de facto doing it. Hopefully we can get it filled before the new administration comes in. We've got the bigger one in California, I think the biggest one in the country.

But we're taking not just animals in our field office. All the other field offices, Forest Service wants to send some our way, no room. China lake as well. When we get the nuance gatherings that are adjacent to be on land and private. We're working on those as well. It's a really interesting operation. Again, we hope to get out there at our next meeting. Archeologist position-- not filling anytime soon-- lack of HR capacity and things. Thankfully Mark and others are working to fill the gaps. We have a District archaeologist that helps us with the work. You met Alex yesterday. Tyler will help us a lot to we can keep the projects moving forward. But we can't really do anything without archeological clearance in terms of decision-making. That's going to be a challenge but working through that as well.

Environmental coordinator, we're waiting to see who we have on the list with the other offices. Realty, I've got one person that does realty and has been there a long time but is going to be on the doorsteps of retirement as well. Looks like we will be get one --- doing work for the Ridgecrest field office, -- that's going to help us out. Geologist position is vacant. Like I mentioned the mining, key to have the geologist. And we try to get a person-- we'll be without a geologist for a while and we're working for the Needles geologist to help us out a bit. Hopefully we'll have the position filled in the next couple of months as well. Administrative side I have my officer who is also my budget officer and-- assistants because we have those positions vacant and not filled any time soon either. Wilderness planner and on the fire side-- we have two engine stations to cover the 1.8 million acres with one caption. That's a challenge as well, on the operational side.

One decision I made is our office, we're going to shift back to 8 a.m. to 4 p.m., with one person doing three jobs-- needs time to do her job. And remain open to the public nonstop 8 a.m. to 4 pm., five days a week. Waiting to get the numbers changed in the door before we announce that.

So, as you can tell, staffing is my greatest challenge amongst all these right now. And we're working through those issues. On the plus side I've never come to a job especially as a manager with such a solid team around me. You met Tom. My assistant manager, Dana, chief law enforcement ranger, admin officer has all been there for a long time. I couldn't be more fortunate to come into a place where I have that institutional knowledge and reliability with the individuals that allows me to be in stuff like this. They're holding the fort down. We're developing what we need to, to move forward successfully. Need more bodies to do that but even more than that we need to continue to develop partnerships etc. So that's-- I'll pause for questions and have one more thing for you.

>>ROBINSON: Do you have any information on the Deep Rose project in Rose Valley?

>> DESENZE: I know about that. We haven't heard anything lately. It's on private land.

>> ROBINSON: No. The access road is on BLM. We went out ten years ago and discuss-- they put in a road. [inaudible]. I was out there. And they want to expand the road, change the road and-- they figured if they go to the state land-- [inaudible]. BLM doesn't want any drilling. And they're having installed the ground water already. So, they went all the way, long round the way on top of the mountain and talking about directional drilling. Out by 30, 40,000 feet. And that's beyond anything I've heard of. And also, that school section with the state land, the school section every township has one, that's where they're going to drill from. When they cross from the underground, when they cross from the state land boundary into federal land does the federal land have jurisdiction again? [inaudible].

>> DESENZE: That's more complicated than I can answer right now.

>>ROBINSON: I keep asking questions, but I don't get any answers.

>>DESENZE: That's fair. I don't know enough about it to give you a good answer. I'll find that out. I'm heading out to the nearby site next week. With that, my preparation, they've also done work on that road post Hillary. That needs to be addressed. I'll get some more information for you. And I'll see you this Wednesday. But I'll see if I can get information before that from Tom. If not, I'll have it for you soon. That's the best I can do right now.

>> ROBINSON: We walked out to the area and we found quite a bit of cultural resources--

>> DESENZE: Absolutely. All the place out there amongst other things. The other item unless there's other questions, we'll figure out our dates for our March meeting. I think it's in March. Right now, I polled a few of you for sites to visit. I heard jawbone, Mojave, Wild horse and burro facility, Trona. We have time to figure that out. But send them my way because I'm still getting familiar with this area as well. I don't know what you all have most interest in. That can fill up a good day for us with most of that stuff.

>>LYNCH: Okay. Questions for Phil? Any online? Okay. Paul.

>>GIBBS: So Ed, in addition to the staff that Brandon has in San Diego County to-- [inaudible].

So, they have office space there at CalFire (away from mic). Dealing with a number of fires at the border and across the border activity. And also, Joe mentioned and we talked about continuing resolutions. So, one of those exceptions he said there were exceptions. One of those is prior year funding. We have \$2 million in field spending that were allocated to the national office from FY'23. And those funds are in addition to our FY 25 allocation which does have that limitation-- (away from mic).

Hiring-wise, it's pretty much a constant shuffle. And we're pretty much always recruiting and filling different positions, dispatch center is one of those we pretty much are constantly functioning with vacancies there; about 25% of positions are vacant there.

And then our engine captains we had success filling those but created holes down below. Now we're in the process of filling the holes. And then we have a one person who is retiring. Trying to get those positions filled before-- and then we're having a hiring fair at Apple Valley starting next Thursday. And that will be for our temporary firefighters entry level. And that's Thursday and Friday starting next week. And because we have background checks, medical exams, and drug tests, so we have to start these in the Fall to get people on in, in May or so.

And typically, we did one last December in Riverside and Bakersfield and Northridge before that. They've been successful. So, we'll continue out with that. You know, also mentioned when we have holes like we were not able to fill it-- the wells-- (away from mic) what we do is bring in folks from outside of our area. Most summer we had four or five engines, different rotations coming in, to supplement-- and most of the time we've had one of those to help out.

We got approval for that to continue until the end of this month and got additional severity funding to augmented funding. We also got that approved through the end of this month. So, as it continues to be drying a lot in places for us and continue to have fires, that's why-- the sheet's pretty updated as far as fires go, we had six to eight fires since the sheet was updated. Two-- Border 77 fire which came across from Mexico and into the U.S., a little over 100 acres there about 40% of that on BLM land. And also, more recently on Thanksgiving, late afternoon or early evening, Canyon Crest fire, Valley area between 60 and 10 burned towards Fontana. That was 250 acres and 150 acres on BLM, the rest on private.

Interesting call first came into San Bernardino County fire district. And then got switched over. And that one's fully contained now. We still have staff out there before they officially called it out. And that's it. Questions?

>> LYNCH: Any questions for Paul?

>> BANIS: We had our Dell fire.

>>GIBBS: It was very busy this year.

>> BANIS: Dell fire just west of the dove springs off highway recreation area, started in the actual Dove Spring which is outside the area. Connected by the trails and was a fast run, very quick run, direct west a thousand acres impacting about 40 miles of well used trails.

The agency, BLM, has put in for emergency funding to help with potential fencing and signing because it burned right down to the ground. And impacted about a dozen of our restoration sites.

So unfortunately, that 1,000-acre patch is its own restoration site. And hopefully we can help when the time comes and the funding is available to help contain the traffic to the designated grounds, keep them off the fire area to let it grow back. That was unfortunate that it hit our neighborhood. But glad to see it only went a thousand acres. Sounds like a lot but on that particular day it was a really fast wind and quite a strong run. So, thanks to the fire suppression crew for putting it out quickly. Thank you.

>>DESENZE: It would have been the day before, it would have been 10,000 plus acres. We got lucky on that one for timing.

>>LYNCH: Questions for Paul? Okay, so we're scheduled for a break. But if folks want to push through and get it done.

>>ALL DAC MEMBERS: Yes.

>> HAAS: Okay. All right. Thank you, Shelly. Now we have work to do for future meetings and topics. Would any DAC members like to propose agenda topics for future meetings? All right. Not seeing any suggestions at the moment. If anything comes to mind, email and we can build an agenda as we get close Um, so next item we--

>>BANIS: Mojave trails. I don't want to miss the opportunity for this Desert Advisory Council to have timely input on the draft. Know exactly when that is going to be and when the meeting is going to be. If there's going to be a *Federal Register* notice put together for these upcoming years of meetings. I'd like the notice to be written in a way in which the DAC has a chance to review and comment on that draft. Just make sure we're in there in a timely basis.

>> HAAS: All right. Thank you, Randy. Anyone else? Seeing no one else, let's move onto confirming the dates of our next three meetings. So proposed possible dates, first we have the weekend of March 29 for our Ridgecrest DAC meeting. Is that a disaster for anyone or sounds wonderful?

>> REYES: I will be out of town. So, for whatever that's worth.

>> HAAS: All right. Moving down the line, we are looking at July 12 for our El Centro meeting. And then third meeting of 2025 is proposed as November 15 for the Palm Springs field office.

>> LYNCH: What was the July meeting again?

>> HAAS: July was the 12th.

>> LYNCH: Sorry when was the last one?

>> HAAS: The weekend of November 15 for the Palm Springs meeting.

>>BANIS: Trifecta for me which is great.

>> HAAS: All right. So, I think we move forward with the dates for the moment. Obviously, we can continue to work on them and confirm them via email as we go forward. All right. The final item here it's time to discuss and vote for a new Chairperson for the Desert Advisory Council. I would like to start with saying that it has been a pleasure helping out in this capacity. This is my first time. And it's been great with BLM staff and DAC members. And if I could take the privilege, I would like to propose that our next Chair is Mr. Randy Banis.

>> BANIS: Happy to. If the majority will suffer through me again.

>>MCGLYNN: I think that would be the minority that would suffer. [laughter]

>> A motion?

>> HAAS: So Randy's receptive to it. So someone would like to make a motion?

>> HENNING: I second it.

>> HAAS: And seconded. All in favor, say aye.

>>DAC MEMBERS: Aye.

>>HAAS: Oppose? All right. Congratulations. [clapping] I don't see it on the script. I imagine we need to do the same thing for Vice Chair, correct?

>> LYNCH: I'll not sure timing-wise.

>>MIYAMOTO: Yes, same for Vice Chair.

>> HENNING: So I share the same sentiment similar to Hans. My first-time being Vice Chair on the DAC. Thank you. I'm glad to support Hans. But I would like to nominate Steven Reyes to serve as the next Vice Chair.

>> ROWE: I'll second it.

>> HAAS: Very good. All right. Steven has been nominated. And the motion has been seconded. All those in favor say aye.

>> DAC MEMBERS: Aye.

>>HAAS: And any opposed? All right. The motion passes, congratulations, Steven.

>> REYES: Thank you.

>>HAAS: All right with that, any go backs or last minute items?

>> REYES: I always have a need to thank Shelly and the staff and for Hans to finishing up his term. Thank you everybody. Big footprint-- thank you.

>> LYNCH: Thanks again, Hans for being Chairperson. Really appreciate the effort there. So, thank you for your term as well as Jack. His terms up in February. So, we really appreciate the diversity of the group. I was explaining earlier at lunch time, appreciate the diversity of this group and respect everybody's opinions and what they bring to the table. Thank you for your

service for helping us out on the DAC. Appreciate it. If there's nothing else, we'll adjourn the meeting. Thanks, everybody.

>> HAAS: Thank you very much.

MEETING ADJOURNED at approximately 3: 25 p.m. PT.