

# Carrizo Plain National Monument Advisory Committee

## MINUTES of June 7, 2003 MEETING

Meeting opened at 10:10am

Members of Advisory Council present:

- Neil Havlik
- Ellen Cypher
- Bob Binnewies
- Bill Vanherweg
- Mike Ryan
- Ray Watson
- Kirk Brettschneider
- Michael Khus-Zarate
- Dale Kuhnle

John Skibinski, Associate Field Office Manager, BLM, began with orientation and went over objectives:

- Review developing perspectives about the ecology of the Carrizo
- Advise about range alternatives for consideration in Management Plan
- Continue learning about the Carrizo Plain resources
- Decide upon next steps and meeting schedule

Neil Havlik, Advisory Committee Chair, opened with his idea of “Expansion of the Monument Boundaries”. He provided a handout for future discussion at another meeting.

Neil invited other members of the Committee to bring their ideas to the table for discussion.

Marlene Braun, BLM Monument Manager and Chris Ryan, BLM RMP Coordinator, began Powerpoint presentation:

### **1. Ecosystem Subregions**

Larry Saslaw, BLM Wildlife Biologist, discussed new designation of Ecosystem Sub-regions: North Elkhorn, South Elkhorn, North Carrizo, South Carrizo, Soda Lake, Foothills, Caliente Mountain, Cuyama Valley, and Temblor Mountains.

Handout discussing Description, Vision and Treatment was distributed.

Neil Havlik brought up fire concerns and how to manage sub-regions.

Larry S. referred to Handout under treatments and stated that was addressed.

Primary management tool – decrease cover of non-native plants. This benefits native species.

Bob Stafford, California Department of Fish & Game, agrees with sub-regions.

He states that the CDF&G has been addressing the same type of management

and that some of the CDF&G sub-regions overlay several of the CPNM sub-regions.

Mike Zarate – Is it true we no longer manage grazing strictly by pastures?

Larry S. - Ecosystem overlays to consider tools to use for the pastures. Depends on dry residual matter what tools should be used, i.e.; grazing, fire, etc. The pasture mindset is remnant of past history of CPNM and we use it for guidelines.

Bob Binnewies - Describe to us what region was like before human impact.

Larry S. gave a brief history of ecosystems in years gone by.

Deb Hillyard and Bob Stafford, both of CDF&G, interjected their perspectives.

Kirk Brettschneider wants to see if Sub-regions of CDF&G and BLM's designations will come together for management purposes.

Larry S. and Bob S. said it is an ongoing project with that as the goal.

## **2. Criteria for Developing & Evaluating Alternatives**

- Consistency w/existing law & policy
- Consistency w/mission & vision
- Consistency w/Proclamation
- Consideration of science and economics of treatments
- Safe and enjoyable visitor use while protecting resources
- Management flexibility to achieve mission

Ray Watson asked if oil and gas properties on Carrizo were being considered for exchange in order to preserve their natural resource value. Occidental Oil owns 30,000 acres of subsurface.

John Skibinski said that was being looked into.

### **Painted Rock**

Duane Christian, BLM Archaeologist, stated that the goal of BLM's cultural management was to balance protection with access. Duane gave a brief history of the management of Painted Rock.

#### **Current Management**

- Open to general public access from July 16 through February.
- Open by tour only from March 1 through July 15 (raptor nesting period)

#### **Proposed Alternative**

- Close area to general public access
- Provide access through organized tours only

### **Saucito Rocks**

#### **Current Management**

- Open through occasional guided tours (average-one per year)
- Public access if person hikes 4-5 miles

#### **Proposed Alternative**

- Guided tours only

- Close site to general public access
- Consider installation of surveillance equipment

Neil H. – Should Saucito Rocks be closed off completely because of its sensitive nature....complete closure to everyone except scientists and Native Americans?

Duane C. – Native Americans retain access through previous legislation.

Ray Watson – How does BLM manage tours at this time, year round, and is there a process to charge visitors to recoup costs?

Mike Zarate – Any other promotion of the Rocks would lead to more deterioration. The Native American Advisory Committee has restricted promotion. The NAAC has a problem with commercial groups charging individuals to promote religious sites.

Ellen Cypher – The Central California Resource Advisory Council established guideline for use permits and charging fees. She will bring it to next meeting.

Bob Binnewies – Suggests that BLM check with other site managers to see what they are doing and what policies they have set up regarding donations versus charging.

Another proposed alternative would be guided tours only, year round. Optimum protection. The Painted Rock would be closed to self access year round.

Mike Ryan – Suggests that CPNM hire a fulltime Ranger with a pilots license and buy a plane or helicopter for surveillance.

Bob Stafford – The BLM coordinates with CDF&G. They have that capability.

Bob Binnewies – Is surveillance equipment really needed on Painted Rock?

Duane C. – We have at least one incident of vandalism a year. Surveillance equipment is really a good option but it really needs to be researched because of the variety of types out there.

Bob B. – Is there anyway to close the rock at night?

Don Maruska addressed the AC – Are the proposed alternatives viable?

Mike Zarate – Suggested 3<sup>rd</sup> and 4<sup>th</sup> proposed alternatives:

- Close them certain times of the year and give guided tours the rest. This would be for both Painted Rock and Saucito Rock
- Saucito completely closed year round and Painted Rock only open to tours.

Neil H. – Ask staff to look at probable closures; seasonal, etc. Bring back to next meeting.

**Break – 12:10pm**

## **Resume – Working Lunch at 12:20pm**

### **3. Grazing on the CPNM**

Marlene Braun presented an overview of maps showing allotments and how they would be affected with each of the four alternatives.

She explained the difference between Free-Use Allotments and Traditional Allotments.

Free-Use – Falls under same regulations as Traditional, however there is no “preference” or permitted use given to the allotment and grazed only for management purposes.

Traditional – These allotments have “preference” meaning they graze most years unless there is some natural cause that will not allow it such as fire, drought, etc.

A handout was distributed explaining the differences and explaining the four alternatives.

Basically, Alternative 1 is existing allotments as they are today. Alternative 2 has only a slight change, the addition of 2 “no graze” pastures. Alternative 3 basically shows that over time the Traditional allotments would change to Free-Use and there are additional “no-graze” pastures. Alternative 4 shows that there would be no grazing at all on the Monument and the grasses and native and non-native plants would have to be managed in other ways.

Neil H. – What caused closure of fault-line pastures?

Larry S. – Due to the scattered land holdings in that area it was a management decision to close the pastures.

Ray Watson – Would it be possible to supply information showing the benefits or damage in grazing each of the allotments? Will this information be forthcoming?

Marlene B. – That information will be contained in the Environmental Analysis of the Management Plan.

Ray Watson – Are there any property rights being impacted?

Marlene B. – It is all public land being addressed in the Plan, however we know it does impact grazers economically and that is being taken into consideration.

Ellen Cypher – Can you change “no-graze” sites without an amendment to the Land Use Plan?

Marlene B. – Yes at this time, however when the Plan is accepted it will take going through the whole process of amending the Plan again if another change is proposed.

Bob Binnewies – Is there a difference in management policies per type of lease?

Larry S. – Rangeland health is now stressed through the national Standards and Guidelines set forth a couple of years ago. It provides adaptive management.

Bob B. – When do these alternatives have to be decided? The AC would like to have a position on final alternative. Ellen C. and Mike Ryan both concur.

Neil H. – Recently, he read a study by the NRCS – In it was a soil survey of the Carrizo Plain. Can we incorporate this survey into the Land Use Plan showing what the land capabilities are? What are some of the concerns regarding special species, such as pronghorn antelope? What is some of the data regarding grazing showing results of favorable years, normal years, and unfavorable years?

Larry S. – Free-Use is decided yearly on rainfall. Normally mulch management is deciding factor. This can be changed annually.

Bill Vanherweg – Stated that he would like to see all allotments made Free-Use. No preferences, no closures. Don't paint yourself into a corner. What kind of science drives closures? He would like to see a fifth alternative showing all grazing allotments would be yellow ( Free-Use) and there would be no red (closures) and no green (Traditional) on the map.

Neil H. – Extend rationale to not only Traditional areas but to closures also.

Ellen C. – There is a proposal to establish a Scientific Advisory Council to assist BLM in management decisions. Can this be included in the Land Use Plan?

Marlene B. – Discussed rationale for closed pastures – set aside as long term, no graze controls.

Bob B. – Marlene's cautions must be considered. Those areas on maps determined as no-graze/unavailable already have been designated because of scientific and political reasons. Does not feel that "all yellow (Free-Use)" is viable. It will cause more management problems.

Neil H. – I think we still need to do an analysis of Alternative 5. Really it is the analysis of alternative 3 with simply including additional studies of closure (red) being opened (yellow).

Kirk Brettschneider – Make certain the managers have to take science into consideration to make changes. Include that in the Plan. Going to an "all yellow" map might prevent this.

Ann McMahon, The Nature Conservancy – TNC is undergoing establishing management policies and science governing grazing.

Deb Hillyard, CDF&G - The decisions that are presented in alternatives 1-3 have been supported by good scientific study. There needs to be an awareness of NEPA consequences versus Long-term Planning. This will be included in any Biological Opinion done.

Bob B. – Flexibility leans to Alternatives 1,2, and 3, especially 3. If we throw up an all yellow map it will become a political barrier to BLM managers.

Dale Kuhnle – Does good science mean that eventually we will end up with Alternative 4? All red? Does red ever change to yellow?

Ellen C. – Maybe we should only consider original 4 alternatives since they were brought about by public comment?

Don Maruska – Who wants to include a 5<sup>th</sup> alternative? Half of the AC feel it would help to have this alternative analyzed.

Yes – Bill V., Dale K., Neil H., Mike R.

No – Mike Zarate, Bob B., Kirk B., Ellen C.

Ray Watson was absent.

Bob B. – All yellow map would disturb pastures that are included in 6 year studies of ungrazing versus grazing.

#### **4. Alternatives to Managing Roads on the CPNM**

Johna Hurl, BLM, Assistant Monument Manager – In last planning effort it was decided to close parts of 7 roads. BLM wants to take a look at overall picture, taking into consideration recent road survey, aerial photos, resource concerns, etc. One issue is drainages are being utilized as roads. This needs to be considered.

Mike Ryan – What are some of the reasons that roads would be closed?

Johna H. – Some of the things would be: roads with duplicate destinations, roads that impact sensitive species, and to limit the amount of roads used for dispersed camping.

Mike R. – Can green sticker vehicles use the CPNM?

Johna H. – Only on BLM roads.

Ellen C. – Wilderness Coalition – were any proposed Wilderness Study Areas not considered because we need to rehab roads?

Marlene – No, four areas didn't meet other WSA criteria besides roads.

Neil H. – He would like “road hierarchy” to be included in Plan to include types of uses and restrictions. Also will connectivity of the roads be a consideration?

Dave Matthews, Member of the public, - Are the people who did the road survey from BLM?

Johna H. – Yes

Dave M. – After this survey is done, will BLM make the information available to the public in map form?

Johna H. - Yes

Dave M. – Will the maps be available on CD's?

Marlene B. – That could be done on a case by case basis

## **5. Wilderness**

Marlene B. – BLM conducted a Wilderness Inventory of the Monument in November 2002 after a request by the Wilderness Coalition. They wanted BLM to consider enlarging an existing WSA – Caliente Mountain, and add 5 additional WSA's. After completing the inventories, 4 of the 5 additional WSA's were found not to meet criteria. The Temblor Mountains WSA was the only one that met basic criteria. The inventory also resulted in a proposed enlargement of the Caliente Mountain WSA.

The Secretary of the Interior threw out the Wilderness Handbook canceling all new 202 WSA's. The Caliente Mountain WSA is a 603. BLM is basing their wilderness criteria strictly on the Wilderness Act.

The proposed plan will include the expansion of Caliente Mountain WSA and the addition of the Temblor Mountains WSA. There are several guzzlers in this area. This new inclusion would affect 2 guzzler roads. They are pretty much self-maintained and would be changed to administrative roads only.

Neil H. – How do wilderness areas get designated? Does a Land Use Plan designate them?

Marlene B. – BLM designates wilderness study areas and manages them accordingly. Only Congress can designate a wilderness.

Mike R. – Do the roads on Caliente Mountain have to be closed?

Marlene B. – No, one road is “cherry stemmed”. One that goes up and over to the other side is just outside the wilderness edge.

Neil H. – There is a possibility that the Boxer Bill will be designating its own wilderness areas in the future. Shouldn't someone include our two areas in this process?

Marlene B. – The expanded Caliente Mountain WSA is in the Bill.

Neil H. - In the Resource Management Plan do we anticipate other special “land use zones”...areas that receive a classification for designated usage?

Marlene – In the beginning, the Carrizo Plain was an ACEC (Area of Critical Environmental Concern). Then it was elevated to a Natural Area giving it more protection. Now we are a Monument giving us even more protection. The only designated areas at this time are Wilderness Study Areas. There have been suggestions that we establish botanical protection areas.

**Public Comments – 3:00 pm**

Dave Matthews, Ridgecrest, CA – First he would like to invite the AC to attend the Annual Balloon Festival on the 30<sup>th</sup> of Sept./1<sup>st</sup> of October in Inyokern, CA. It has been newly designated the Kern County Air Show.

He has lived in Ridgecrest for 35 years and moved there to be close to the outdoors. He is a member of the Steering Committee for the Ridgecrest BLM Field Office. He attends all of the Desert District Resource Advisory Council meetings. Now that he has finally retired he has become an OHV enthusiast which fired his interest in BLM Steering Committees.

He wants BLM to know that as people get older, infirmed, they need the right to get out and enjoy recreating.

How many water sources are available for grazing and if grazing closed would water sources be protected? He said, "Don't close things off or destroy things that might have other uses."

Also, who is the Congressman for this area? It was answered that it is Bill Thomas.

Irv McMillan, California Valley, CA – In regards to grazing, he can understand the interest in going to the alternative of switching everything to Free-Use (yellow) however he does not support this because the ungrazed areas should remain ungrazed. Most science is short term and doesn't make long term decisions. It can take a long time to see change and the ungrazed areas need more time and should remain ungrazed.

Dave Matthews - As a final note, "I love cheap beef and I love lamb."

### **Public Comment period ended.**

#### **Timeline of RMP – John Skibinski**

- June 2003 – Develop Transportation Alternatives
- October 2003 – Draft RMP/EA reviewed internally
- March 2004 – Draft RMP to Public
- April 2004 – Public Meetings (3 locations)
- May 2004 – Public Comments Due
- October 2004 – State Director Signs RMP. Distribute RMP to Public

#### **Next Meeting – October**

Neil H. – How about late September?

Bob B. – Could we have a two day meeting including another field trip?

It was decided that the best choice of dates would be the first weekend of October. The 3<sup>rd</sup> and 4<sup>th</sup> of October. There was no consensus on second choice of dates. This needs to be checked with Ray Watson who is not present.

Don Maruska – Objectives of next meeting

#### Field Trip Objectives

- Temblor WSA
- Elkhorn side of Plain (GKR grazed sites)
- Swain Pasture
- Selby Road up and over Caliente Mountain



### Meeting Objectives

- Route Information
- Analysis, preferences
- Neil H. – Expansion of CPNM Boundaries

Place: Carrisa Elementary School again.

Food for the next meeting – Try to get 4-H to cook for us again.

Who will be spending the night at Washburn on October 3<sup>rd</sup>?

- Bob B.
- Ellen C.
- Kirk B.
- Neil H.

Who will be attending the Field Trip?

- Kirk B.,
- Dale K.
- Neil H.
- Ellen C.
- Bob B.
- Mike R.

Field trip will begin at 9:00am at the entrance to Washburn Ranch on Soda Lake Road

### **Summary of Meeting**

The following points were made by the AC members:

- Grateful for professionalism in presentations today for the AC
- Most of the members feel that the AC needs to take positions on Alternatives as a group.
- Maybe shorten list of topics on agenda to give more time to discuss single items.
- Make minutes an agenda item for next meeting for AC official approval. When minutes are distributed and placed on the Web they need to be designated as Draft Minutes.
- Possible distribution of maps showing T&E Species, historical sites, ranches, etc.

Don Maruska, Facilitator - Good job! All of the goals for the meeting were met.

John Skibinski – Closed the meeting by thanking the Advisory Council's participation, the Partners support and involvement, and the hard work of the BLM staff.

**Closed Meeting – 4:00pm**