

Mono Basin Regional Planning Advisory Committee
Meeting Minutes
Wednesday, May 11, 2022, 6:30pm
remote/virtual meeting via Zoom/conference call

Members present: Lisa Cutting, Duncan King, Elin Ljung, Bartshe Miller, Jake Suppa. **Members absent:** Ronda Kauk.

Public attendees & presenters: Mono County: Bob Gardner, Bentley Regehr, Wendy Sugimura. Public: Grace Anderson, Lynn Boulton, Forrest English, Jora Fogg, Ruth Garland, Cole Hawkins, Priscilla Hawkins, Amy Lewis, Mike Light, Nora Livingston, John Ljung, Ilene Mandelbaum, Dave Marquart, Connie Millar, Sally Miller, Samantha, Ray Pok, Margy Verba, Jeff Wyneken.

1. Call to order & pledge of allegiance: 6:31pm

2. Public comment: Ray Pok, SCE: Filed with the PUC to replace existing infrastructure across the street from the substation; three wooden poles will be placed with one tubular steel pole and two other poles will be replaced with taller poles. Deadline for public comments is tomorrow. Construction is anticipated to start in June and finish in September.

Ilene Mandelbaum: Requested that Ray Pok be invited to the next RPAC meeting to continue discussing other SCE-related issues, like when SCE will be reopening the road that was closed at the substation.

3. Review minutes from April 13, 2022: Duncan moved to approve minutes as presented, Lisa seconded, unanimous approval.

4. Inyo National Forest update (Stephanie Heller): Not present.

5. Bodie Hills Conservation presentation (Forrest English): Forrest gave a presentation about the Bodie Hills and is seeking an RPAC letter of support for a designation of National Conservation Area. An NCA is a public land designation that is passed by Congress; unlike Wilderness Areas they are site-specific and tailored to specific places. Mining possibilities in the NCA would be removed through withdrawal from 1872 Mining Act that would be written into the bill. NCA would surround Bodie; private and State lands are explicitly excluded. NCA goals are compatible with some Mono County General Plan and Mono Basin Community Plan goals. NCA legislation would go through and then a management plan would be developed through a stakeholder process (dealing with anything not put in the statute); when the management plan is developed after the bill passes that's where the voluntary grazing agreements, travel management, etc. would get figured out. Right now the Bodie Hills are managed under the general Bishop field office plan from 1993 and at least an NCA designation would get a specific management plan in place. Process for an NCA designation would be: demonstrate local support through RPAC letter, then to the Board of Supervisors, keep engaging further up the chain on the long road toward federal designation.

Questions from RPAC members and the public:

- What's the difference between an NCA and a National Monument? Monument designated through the Antiquities Act and managed by the National Park Service; NCA designation is passed through Congress; both provide for withdrawn mineral rights.

- Any recent examples of NCA designations and how are they doing in terms of management/ community support/use/etc? Forrest will look into that.
- What is the emphasis in an NCA when there may be conflicting uses?
- What kinds of protection for biodiversity?
- How are roadless areas handled? Is there still an option for them to become Wilderness?
- An NCA encourages OHV recreation; why not a National Wildlife Refuge? NWR requires a transfer of management from BLM to FWS and BLM is not interested in that.
- What is the goal? Why not aim for the level of protection the area really deserves?

Comments from RPAC members and the public: Bodie Hills have higher levels of biodiversity and physical diversity than other ranges that neighbor the Sierra Nevada; not clear how NCA will provide protection for these particular values so not sure of support for the proposal; very concerned about increasing recreation; would like to see livestock grazing excluded. NCA is a generic template and we don't have the specifics lined up; at a minimum, withdrawing mining is critical because the pressure to mine will only increase; concerns about rising recreation impacts need to be addressed and possibly balanced with some Wilderness Areas; would hope this community would be united in opposing large-scale mining; otherwise not sure how we move forward; Mono County will be fighting large-scale mining proposals forever unless they're banned.

Discuss tonight and agendaize for the next month's meeting to vote about a letter of support.

6. Mono Basin Fire Safe Council: See the meeting minutes online here (Bentley will email them to RPAC list as well): <https://monocounty.ca.gov/rpac-mono-basin/page/mono-basin-rpac-regular-meeting-33>.

7. Mono Basin Housing Committee: No meeting this month. Next meeting is June 7, 2022 at 7:00pm.

8. Mono Basin Bear Committee: Paul McFarland has organized an interagency meeting happening this Friday (Duncan will attend) to make sure message and action is consistent.

9. Supervisor Gardner's report: Welcome Jake Suppa, new RPAC member who was appointed yesterday. Molly DesBaillets has applied to join RPAC; her application will come before the Board of Supervisors in early June prior to the next RPAC meeting. Need more members!

Last week the Board of Supervisors approved a moratorium on short-term rentals in unincorporated parts of the County that took effect on May 3; some applications are still in process and will be able to move forward under the new process. Doesn't affect Mono City because Mono City already has a ban but may affect single-family residences in Lee Vining. Moratorium is in effect for 45 days as an emergency action and can be extended up to two years, requiring Board action next month. Only dependent on unit type, not land use designation.

Attended the Great Basin Unified Air Pollution Control District meeting last week as an alternate for Supervisor Duggan. Lots of discussion about Owens Lake issues. They approved an air quality monitoring plan for the year that included the Mono Basin. The Board of Supervisors needs a briefing from Great Basin in the summer.

Inyo National Forest has closed the Grant Lake lakebed to any motorized vehicle use and have put up signs and barriers. People can still dispersed camp on the east side of the lake but cannot go onto the

lakebed. So far seems that campers/tourists have been adhering to that but Memorial Day will be a test of the policy.

Malcolm North and Craig Thomas will speak about fire ecology at Monday's Citizens Wildfire Academy presentation.

10. Vice Chair's report: Elin drafted the letter of support for federal recognition for the Kutzadika'a Tribe; will be sending that out for RPAC approval.

11. Member reports:

Elin: Enjoyed the first Citizens' Wildfire Academy presentation; planning to attend the next one.

Bartshe: On April 1st DWP's stream diversions were reduced automatically from 16,000 acre-feet to 4,500 acre-feet because Mono Lake was measured below 6380 feet above sea level. DWP has indicated they will not begin water exports from Grant Lake Reservoir until the fall. New State Water Board order is in effect that requires a minimum level of at least 11,500 acre-feet all year with a June–September minimum level of 20,000 acre-feet; not sure Grant will rise up the summer minimum this year. DWP cannot export water when Grant is so low and had to stop short of getting their whole amount in March because of Grant's low level, which was the first time this has ever happened.

Jake: Looking forward to participating as an RPAC member.

Duncan: Hearing more and more concern about local fire conditions and fewer fire resources being available here this summer.

12. Nominate and elect officers for Chair and Vice Chair: Duncan nominated Lisa as Chair, Elin seconded. Elin nominated Jake as Vice Chair, Duncan seconded. Approved unanimously.

13. Review and adopt resolution to meet virtually until June 8, 2022 (planning staff): Lisa moved to approve, Bartshe seconded, unanimous vote in favor of adopting the resolution.

14. Information items (planning staff): See the project updates chart here: <https://monocounty.ca.gov/rpac-mono-basin/page/mono-basin-rpac-regular-meeting-33>.

HipCamp: County needs to feel comfortable that analysis is legally defensible so the project won't be coming before Planning Commission yet. Will release full project documentation ten days prior to the meeting and will try to distribute to the RPAC list as well (but no promises).

Caltrans sent an update about the Lee Vining Rehab Project; Bentley will send it to the RPAC list.

15. Upcoming agenda items: Ray Pok with a general SCE update; Bodie Hills protection discussion; Conway Ranch 2022 operation plan; quarterly appearance of all land management agencies; discussion about the role of RPAC/meeting schedule; Lee Vining skate park; Lee Vining hydro relicensing at next public input stage.

16. Adjourned to next meeting, June 8, 2022: 7:59pm