

Mono Basin Regional Planning Advisory Committee
Meeting Minutes
Wednesday, May 12, 2021, 6:30pm
remote/virtual meeting via Zoom/conference call

Members present: Duncan King, Lisa Cutting, Elin Ljung, Bartshe Miller

Public attendees & presenters: Bob Gardner, Bentley Regehr, Wendy Sugimura, Tony Dublino, Justin Nalder, Grace Anderson, Paul Ashby, Lynn Boulton, Mike Light, Ilene Mandelbaum, Dave Marquart, Connie Millar, Megan Mullowney, George Swiggum, Margy Verba, Jeff Wyneken, (714) 656-5710, (831) 818-4520

1. Call to order & pledge of allegiance: 6:32pm

2. Public comment: George Swiggum: Described his project application currently with the County to permit an off-grid camping area along Cottonwood Canyon Road.

3. Review minutes from April 14, 2021: Bartshe moved to approve the minutes, Duncan seconded, motion passed unanimously.

4. Supervisor Gardner's report: Added two new members to the RPAC: Ronda Kauk and Kevin Brown bring us to seven members; still looking for additional members. On May 25th there will be a public town hall about what the dispersed camping group has been working on. Yesterday Mono County talked about the budget for the fiscal year starting July 1; budget is in pretty good shape since it's funded by property taxes, which didn't suffer under Covid, but there are lots of demands on those resources; will have workshops next week with different departments. Met with agencies about wild horses in the Mono Basin; State Parks proposing to build a fence to protect sand tufa that is being damaged by horse activity; Bob working on a funding proposal (\$70K) for labor because they need money to build it; even if the USFS did a gather there's nowhere to put the horses; need someone to coordinate the horse meetings so let Bob know if anyone who can do that every other month. Tioga Pass: Plows have punched through, clearing turnouts, water systems, and sewage systems; hopefully will open in the next few weeks but no definite date yet. Mono County Grand Jury is looking for people to serve a one-year term starting in July; want geographical representation from Lee Vining or June Lake; it's run through the courts and has oversight for anything and everything in the county.

5. Chair's report: Joe Suppa had a fire out on his property and a heart attack about ten days ago; there's a [GoFundMe page](#) if you can help. Participating in the dispersed camping effort. Earth Day went well. Fire Safe Council has lots of fire concerns with this drought.

6. Members' reports:

Lisa: Removed an illegal fire ring up Lundy Canyon a few weeks ago.

Elin: Attended Representative Jay Obernolte's Mammoth Voices conversation; glad to hear he'll be reintroducing the bill for federal recognition for the Kutzadika'a Tribe. Attended the Tioga Inn hearing at the Board of Supervisors. Glad the South Tufa boardwalk was replaced. Continuing to work with the dispersed camping group. Attending/watching Board of Supervisors meetings for fire/camping items.

Bartshe: DWP Commissioners approved the mitigated negative declaration for the Grant Lake Outlet project; means the State Water Board will amend DWP's water diversion license sometime this summer for DWP to implement new streamflows and start work on Grant Outlet. Mono Lake is expected to drop

in the next year; lake is close to the level where the Mono Lake Committee had to put up an electric fence to keep coyotes off of the landbridge and gull colony. DWP can export 16,000 acre-feet between now and March 31, 2022; next year their exports may be reduced to 4,500 acre-feet if Mono Lake is below 6380 feet on April 1, 2022. Lee Vining Creek Trail cleanup was a success thanks to County, DeChambeau Creek Foundation, Mono Lake Committee. Thanks to Wendy and Mono County for writing a great letter about Kore Mining's proposal in Long Valley.

Kevin: not in attendance

Ronda: not in attendance

7. Inyo National Forest update (Megan Mullowney): Getting campgrounds open: Big Springs and Glass Creek opened last week; Big Bend concessionaire is hoping to open by end of May; water system is on at Aspen Campground; will communicate more openings to the community as they happen. Dispersed camping effort is to get best practices in place for this summer; more info to come at the town hall; will get more signage installed thanks to Matt Paruolo and DWP sign shop; will have more public contacts from folks in green uniforms driving around and talking with people; renewing longstanding closure orders for places where dispersed camping needs to be closed; will be a new closure order involving Grant Lake. Mono Basin Visitor Center will be opening by Memorial Day if possible with plexiglas shields and limited capacity; still need volunteers to help outside the Visitor Center. New recreation officer Jameisha Washington will be starting May 24; her hiring is a signal to the district and community that the Inyo Forest Supervisor is revitalizing USFS presence in the Mono Lake Ranger District.

8. Mono Basin Fire Safe Council: Got the banner back up on the fire truck; the truck may be moved around town periodically this summer to different visible locations. Considering offering a home hardening Zoom seminar. Lee Vining Fire Department needs access to some gate keys from SCE. Robbie Di Paolo leads the Fire Safe Council and all are welcome to attend the meetings. Meetings are the third Wednesday of each month; next meeting is May 19 at 5:00pm.

9. Updates on Conway Ranch (Justin Nalder): See report at the Mono Basin RPAC page <https://monocounty.ca.gov/rpac-mono-basin/page/mono-basin>.

Annual report summary: Repaired the lower Conway headgate. Cleared ditches of vegetation. Removed invasive plant species. Lower Conway and Bell diversions have data loggers to monitor water flowing in from Wilson Creek; solar panel steel poles were blown down in windstorms so had to be remounted. Did a stabilization project on the upper Conway Ranch house with Mono Basin Historical Society and Mono County facilities crew with historical construction methods. Put out a cattle grazing RFP in late 2020; responses collected in early 2021 and Hunewill Land & Livestock was selected as the lessee. Working with SCE because the water that goes to Conway Ranch goes through the Lundy Power Plant.

Operations plan summary: Expect to see some cattle on Conway & Mattly Ranch. Will be putting water into meadow segments south of the old aquaculture ponds. Continue with noxious plant removal and hope to get a volunteer day going like in 2019. Have a proposal for small-scale agriculture from the Suppa family. Expecting that SCE will do maintenance on power plant in September so will have to come up with alternative irrigation plans using the Adair Ditch, which limits irrigation of Mattly Ranch. Interest from Kutzadika'a Tribe in developing an MOU for Tribal events like a Cry Dance. Interpretive trail concept to connect Conway Ranch across Wilson Creek using existing trails that would connect up into Bodie Hills.

Grazing discussion: Fencing will be up by the end of the month. Fencing does not go into Wilson ravine on Conway Ranch; will stay further away from river corridor than was written into the agreement. Primary focus on Conway and Mattly will be grazed later in the season; if Justin knows where cows will be ahead of time he'll let people know. Hunewills know where the bog area is and it's not a great area for cattle especially when wet; operationally and environmentally doesn't make sense for cows to be there. Old enclosure will be rebuilt around natural spring west of the ranch houses but spring and seep system as it proceeds south of the spring head will not be fenced off. Water for cattle will be pulled from Virginia Creek for upper Conway and that and the upper spring flow (but not spring head) will be a source for cattle. Beyond that there will have to be a pump and trough system from one of the gauged sources. Plan as written will meet conservation easement requirements.

Discussion about public interest in going out on the property with the County and lessee for updates, which will not be possible. County is bound by conservation easement in 2014 to keep up the property in accordance with the easement; everything mentioned here tonight is listed in the easement as conservation values. Looking to the Eastern Sierra Land Trust (ESLT) to use the endowment to tell County what they should be doing; don't want to engage with a different party of stakeholders and interested public when already engaging with ESLT on a 1,000+ page document. County will be threading a needle: cattle will be on the property to reverse a condition that ESLT has said is not appropriate, but the springs and seeps have created habitat types that are also in the easement.

10. Saddlebag Lake Road rehabilitation program (Tony Dublino): County applying for a grant from the Federal Lands Access Program to pave the remaining dirt sections and increase parking along the side and at the end. Bartshe suggests that SCE should be helping with this effort; in the SCE relicensing process the USFS should press for SCE to help with more road maintenance.

11. Discussion on RPAC letter of concern for Pumice Valley Landfill: Released RFP for solid waste services; proposals are due May 26 and will dictate next steps. County has a month to evaluate proposals before making a recommendation to the Board of Supervisors; not sure if any proposals will involve a facility of any kind at Pumice Valley. Town of Mammoth Lakes has released a negative declaration for a facility in Mammoth that would accept municipal solid waste, construction waste, and green waste that would have otherwise gone to Pumice Valley; Pumice Valley would only involve unincorporated County waste. Letter deferred; instead bring proposals back to the June RPAC.

12. Information items (Planning staff): See the project updates chart here: <https://monocounty.ca.gov/rpac-mono-basin/page/mono-basin>. Reminder: RPAC is not a public comment forum; these updates are for informational purposes only.

- Rea Ranch: Applicant has withdrawn his application; no longer active.
- Hip Camp: Still working on CEQA document and will update RPAC on when that goes to the Planning Commission and Board of Supervisors.
- Lundy Canyon yurt: Have not heard from the applicant in a few months. Since there is no formal application yet this project is not in the County process at all. Pre-application is essentially an inquiry and it's up to the applicant to advance the process.
- Tioga Inn: Project was denied on April 20.

13. Upcoming agenda items:

- Pumice Valley Landfill proposals
- Mono Basin Community Plan
 - Reorientation to the plan in June
 - Review in July
 - Review in August
- Conway Ranch – fall 2021
- SCE – ask Cal Rossi to attend to discuss streetlights
- Caltrans pedestrian crossings in Lee Vining – did flashing lights get installed?
- Interpretive trail with Kutzadika’a Tribe and heritage park – Dean Tonenna
- Brown Act administrative rules for how RPACs function
- ATVs in the Mono Basin
- Housing subcommittee

14. Adjourned: 8:13pm