

Mono Basin Regional Planning Advisory Committee
Meeting Minutes
Wednesday, December 14, 2022, 6:30pm
remote/virtual meeting via Zoom/conference call

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

Public: Mono County: Bob Gardner, Paul Roten, Laura Stark, Wendy Sugimura. Public: Grace Anderson, Margaret Eissler, Mike Light, Chris Miles, Walt _____.

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

2. Public comment: Lisa read aloud a comment from Lynn Boulton; see the end of the notes.

3. Review and adopt resolution to meet virtually until January 14, 2023: Elin moved to approve, Lisa seconded, unanimous vote in favor of adopting the resolution.

4. Review minutes from November 9, 2022: Lisa moved to approve the minutes as presented, Jake seconded, unanimous approval.

5. Discuss winter road closures of Lundy and Virginia Lakes roads (Paul Roten, Director of Public Works): Policy for these roads is to remove snow through December unless it becomes impossible (staffing, amount of snow, avalanche danger). They are class 4 & 5 roads so snow is only removed during work hours after class 1, 2, & 3 roads have been cleared. Virginia Lakes Road has been closed in December every year historically. Sue Burak, avalanche consultant, works with County to say when it's safe to work on Lundy, Virginia, Twin Lakes, Rock Creek roads. Working on better communication via the County website about what's plowed and what's not, avalanche updates, plus the policies. People get stuck at the road closures in December and also in spring when snow is melting but not yet cleared. Would be helpful to have Paul back to RPAC meetings in December and March for updates each season.

6. Workshop: General Plan clean-up amendment (Laura Stark, planning staff): Wendy introduced Laura Stark, a new planner for Mono County's Community Development Department, who will be staff support for our RPAC. This clean-up amendment is mostly housekeeping that County tries to do each year. Laura went through the redline document sent to the RPAC list. One required by state law, some intended to clarify or add detail, plus a policy level change for RPAC consideration. Discussion about the redline, which will come back to the RPAC in January.

7. Standing reports & updates:

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

b. Supervisor Gardner's report: Today in Los Angeles met with Cynthia McClain-Hill, president of DWP Board of Commissioners. Bob proposed quarterly meetings with her and DWP staff with a jointly developed agenda to work on mutual concerns like Long Valley irrigation, stream restoration, land purchase (mentioned interest in buying small parcels of land for housing with Lee Vining as an example and she seemed interested, she asked us to come back with a specific parcel to buy). DWP has committed to providing someone at the ESSRP meetings like Steve Ball who has been there and will take more of an active role. Looking forward to creating a framework for discussing more difficult items.

Commend County staff for the snow removal lately. When we get big snows with a couple feet or more it's difficult for staff to plow everyone within a 24 hour period. Can't afford to staff up for big storms and have people/equipment sitting around otherwise. Please be patient.

Stacy Corless is finishing her eighth year of two terms as a Supervisor next Tuesday. Lynda Salcido will be taking over that seat as of the election. Stacy is going to the Sierra Business Council.

Lost the Housing Opportunities Manager due to a personnel matter; we'll be recruiting for that position.

On January 1 we don't have Benton Crossing Landfill anymore due to DWP ending Mono County's lease. Will result in Pumice Valley Landfill being open six days a week as just a transfer station. Probably will be some more truck traffic but we'll see. More residents than Bob realized don't have trash service. If people have questions please call Justin Nalder. County has been putting money away for a while to help restore Benton Crossing to remove hazardous waste and return as best as possible to a decent environmental condition.

Board of Supervisors approved the D&S Waste transfer station project on Highway 167, which plays a role in the changes in waste disposal services in the County.

USFS is working on an over-snow project to determine where snowmobiles can go. Stephanie Heller is in charge of the project. There will be another public comment period or people can reach out to Stephanie with comments/questions.

c. Chair's report: Attended housing committee meeting Monday night – great news about DWP that opens up an alternative to pursue for housing in Lee Vining. At our January RPAC meeting we'll have the election of RPAC officers – process is to both nominate and elect in January – start your campaigns now. We are low again on membership – spread the word and recruit please.

d. Members' reports:

Jake: Viewed the D&S Waste Planning Commission and Board of Supervisors meetings, made comments. Listened to the discussion about RVs as habitable structures. Cory Zila reached out trying to get clarification about cannabis delivery in the County. Wendy: Original cannabis regulations prohibited delivery but during Covid delivery was allowed so people could stay home and still have that service. After Covid restrictions were relaxed the Board of Supervisors decided to keep allowing delivery. Community Development Department is working on a policy to bring to RPACs to change that to allowed delivery more officially instead of provisionally.

Elin: Listened to the Pumice Valley Landfill updates, the discussion about RVs as potential residences from the Dec. 6 Board of Supervisors meeting, and the Planning Commission and Board of Supervisors address the D&S Waste transfer station. Attended Monday's LDTAC meeting to hear about Frontier's application for director review approval of their poles and line over Lee Vining Creek, hoping the Director will require Frontier to put the line back underground. Attended the Housing Committee meeting. The Mono Lake Committee sent a letter to the State Water Board requesting that they take some kind of emergency action and suspend DWP's diversions from Rush & Lee Vining Creeks and require that water to flow into Mono Lake until the lake rises at least six feet from its current, very low level to protect nesting California Gulls and bring the lake back into compliance with Clean Water Act salinity standards.

e. Mono Basin Fire Safe Council: Did not receive November minutes. Next meeting is Wednesday, December 21 at 5:00pm on Zoom.

f. Mono Basin Housing Committee: Sanjay's departure is a disappointment. Working on organizing a community meeting about housing efforts. Next meeting is January 9, 2023, 7:00pm on Zoom.

g. Mono Basin Bear Committee: Paul, Marcella, and Jameisha are working to improve food storage and regulatory signage for County recreation sites based on Yosemite's wording. Humboldt-Toiyabe National Forest is instituting food storage regulations based on Yosemite's in all areas west of Highway 395. Trash storage work being improved with local trash haulers. Paul working with County staff on an ordinance similar to other jurisdictions. Please report all bear incidents at <https://apps.wildlife.ca.gov/wir>.

h. Information items, including project updates (planning staff): Projects: No change with HipCamp. D&S Waste transfer station approved by BOS yesterday. Pumice Valley Landfill update was at the December 6 Board of Supervisors meeting. Frontier overhead line director review.

Starting March 1 AB361 will no longer cover remote meetings like we've been having. New legislation (AB2449) is restrictive: a quorum must meet at a physical location, RPAC members can attend remotely for "just cause" with specific qualifications only two times a year, or in an emergency that's defined by legislation and not used for more than 20% of a year's meetings. There may be some funding available to make the Lee Vining Community Center compatible with hybrid meetings but it's very expensive and won't happen before March, so we should plan on being back in person at Community Center in March. Rules only apply to RPAC members, so the public can still attend remotely if a hybrid option was available, which would be great so we don't lose participation. Lee Vining Fire Department may have hybrid capability. Many other counties are struggling with this and the strict regulations in the bill are a bit surprising; leeway or changes might still happen.

8. Upcoming agenda items: RPAC member terms and officer elections; General Plan redline action items; update from Lynn Boulton about Bodie Hills mining projects; Mono County Sustainable Recreation Program Update with Marcella Rose; California Energy Commission maps for renewable energy projects; 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; Lundy & Virginia Lakes road updates every November/December.

9. Adjourned to next meeting, January 11, 2023: 8:39pm

Public comment from Lynn Boulton:

1. Bald Peak Mineral Exploration Project--This project was recently approved as a categorical exclusion. This project was started by Radius Gold and then taken over by Paramount Gold. Paramount Gold will be drilling at 11 sites on raised platforms. They will use a settling tank and haul the sludge/mud away. They will get to the project site via helicopter and shuttle materials from staging area on the west side of Bald Peak to the drill sites. 4 of the drill sites will be on the CA-NV border. The rest are on the north side of Bald Peak above Rough Creek. Bald Peak is next to Beauty Peak on the Dry Lakes Plateau. There are BSSG leks on the plateau and pronghorn migrate around the north and south sides of Bald Peak. There is

a blackout period from Mar 1-Jun 30 which is the lekking period. So drilling would probably begin in the summer or fall of 2023. This is the first drilling project on the Dry Lakes Plateau.

2. Sawtooth Ridge Mineral Exploration Project--A decision is expected on this project in January, probably as another categorical exclusion. Hecla Nevada will be drilling at 16 sites--13 in the pinyon woodland, 3 in a sagebrush clearing. They will get to the project site using a Forest Service road and then re-opening 1 mile of reclaimed roads from 30 years ago to get to the drill sites. The drill pads are quite large and will have a sump pit at each. This project is between the Aurora Cemetery and Bodie Creek on a pretty steep slope covered in mature, healthy pinyons with some large mountain mahogany and juniper. Not counting the trees in the path of the temporary roads, 750 trees will be removed for the drill pads--mostly pinyon. There are historic and pre-historic cultural resources in the project area. Some in the path of the roads and some in the drill pad areas. There will be a blackout period from Mar 1-Jun 30 which is the lekking period because the Aurora Lek is within 4 miles. Drilling would probably begin in the summer or fall of 2023.

3. Spring Peak Mineral Exploration Project--This project was approved in 2020 as a categorical exclusion. It was started by Radius Gold, was taken over by OceanaGold and now is Headwater Gold's. Headwater Gold will be drilling at 23 sites. They drilled at 5 sites in 2021, drilled 1 or 2 more this November and will continue next summer. They have put in temporary roads to some of the sites and have more roads to put in still. They use sump pits for the waste water and cuttings. One road will cut through a P-J slope that did not burn in the 2013 Spring Peak wildfire. They will get to the project site turning off of Hwy 167 near the CA-NV border onto the transmission line road to Spring Peak. The project site is between Spring Peak, East Brawley Peak, and Aurora Peak. There are BSSG in the area, the Aurora Lek is close by, and pronghorn pass through the area to get to the springs which are on private property. There is a blackout period from Mar 1-Jun 30 which is the lekking period. This area was coming back after the wildfire and wildlife was returning to the area as well.