

Mono Basin Regional Planning Advisory Committee
Meeting Minutes
Wednesday, February 10, 2021, 6:30pm
remote/virtual meeting via Zoom/conference call

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

Public attendees & presenters: Bob Gardner, Wendy Sugimura, Bentley Regehr, Tony Dublino, Kevin Julian, Paul Ashby, Margaret Eissler, Amy Lewis, Dave Marquart, Gordon Martin, Connie Millar, Karl Seiberling, Jim Tabb, Jack Trefry, Jeff Wyneken

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

2. Public comment: none

3. Review minutes from January 13, 2021: Bartshe moved to approve the minutes, Lisa seconded, motion passed unanimously.

4. Supervisor Gardner's report: Paul McFarland will be efficiently facilitating a 90-minute dispersed camping summit tomorrow at 2:00pm on Zoom with agencies, law enforcement, non-profits, other interested parties. The Kutzadika'a Tribe meets every Friday at 9:00am, involved in lots of projects and doing lots of great things, Bob encourages people to listen in, let him know if you'd like the Zoom link for that meeting. Bob sent a request a month ago to Yosemite staff Cecily Muldoon and Kevin Killian about Tioga Pass plowing, will pursue a meeting in March. We need more RPAC members, please pass ideas on to Bob. June Mountain capacity issues were discussed at the June Lake CAC meeting yesterday, June restricted numbers after the big storm due to safety and were maxed out on parking.

5. Chair's report: Listened to the Conway Ranch grazing proposal yesterday at the Board of Supervisors meeting. Would like to compliment the County and the State for the COVID-19 vaccination effort.

6. Members' reports:

Elin: Concerned that despite Mono County's efforts to follow processes that allow for public input, something about it is not working and Mono Basin residents do not feel heard. Conway Ranch and Tioga Inn are both examples of this.

Bartshe: State Water Board put up a notice that draft amended licenses for DWP to divert water from the Mono Basin are up for public review. Public comments due March 8 on the State Water Board's proposal to permit highly destructive suction dredge mining throughout the state, including Mono County waters and all of Mono Lake. Hess Park is becoming an overnight camping/rest area for highway travelers. Would be great if new streetlights in Lee Vining could be a yellow-spectrum light and shielded to protect the dark sky resource. Went through the vaccine process in Walker as a volunteer firefighter.

Lisa: RPAC has been asking for an update on Conway Ranch for months and hasn't had one. RPAC has asked for updates on the Pumice Valley landfill project and hasn't gotten them, deadlines for that project have to be approaching and it shouldn't be a last-minute thing. Questioning the role of the RPAC, feels that RPAC is not engaged on things we should be engaging with, RPAC should be relevant and valuable for people who want to attend.

7. Elections: Bartshe moved to nominate Duncan as Chair, Lisa as Vice Chair, and Elin as Secretary. Duncan seconded Lisa as Vice Chair and Elin as Secretary; Lisa seconded Duncan as Chair. Motion passed unanimously.

8. Inyo National Forest update (Gordon Martin): Mono District Ranger job is moving forward but probably won't be filled until July; have applicants for the Lee Vining recreation position that will be stationed at the Lee Vining Ranger Station. Getting an automated fee machine installed at South Tufa that will take credit cards. The Mono Basin Visitor Center will operate the same way it did last year with the ESIA bookstore open and an information table set up out front; restrooms will be open.

9. Mono Basin Fire Safe Council: Robbie Di Paolo is working on an MOU between fire districts and the council. Annamaria Echeverria from the Inyo is assessing area near Mono City for clearing work this spring. Lisa volunteered to be a liaison between the council and local fire commissioners. Council meetings are 5:00pm on the first Friday of each month.

10. Discussion on Lundy Lake Road gate closures (Kevin Julian): The County plows after small storms to protect the asphalt because snowmobiles making tracks on it is damaging.

- Institutional RPAC memory of County policy 8–10 years ago and prior that the road was closed all winter, more recently has been plowed when there is less than six inches of snow but only up to the dam and not to the resort, it's a Category 5 road which means the lowest priority for plowing.
- Discussion about benefits of gates being closed and road not plowed to provide for different types of recreation and to give the canyon a break, County kept the road closed in the past in part because resort cabin owners didn't want people near their cabins in winter, concerns about scree slope along the lake shedding on vehicles, County also hears from people who want the road plowed and/or don't want it closed without sufficient snow coverage, hopefully taxpayer dollars aren't paying to plow for the one person living near the resort this year, a closure of December 1 through April 1 was proposed, County has gotten a request to relocate lower gate uphill from newly purchased properties that are just uphill of current gate.
- In conclusion, current gate closures and plowing are inconsistent and frustrating, need to come up with a consistent policy that takes into account winter recreation and the needs of the County road crew. This item should come back before the RPAC well before next winter so people know what to expect.

11. Discussion on Conway Ranch (Tony Dublino): Yesterday the Board of Supervisors voted to approve the lease with Hunewill Ranch for the grazing contract and filed a categorical exemption. Conway Ranch has come before the Board and RPAC a number of times and attempts were made to be responsive to comments that came in during those meetings. Felt that the product the Board voted on yesterday reflected the public's input.

Discussion: Would have been better to bring a substantive update to the RPAC before the Board vote to assuage people's concerns and answer their questions. There's a requirement in the easement that either Mono County or ESLT do an annual meeting with the community about the property, which has not happened. The presentation to the Board, the documents, excluding cows from Wilson for watering, and the expressions of support for Hunewill stewardship are encouraging.

12. Discussion on potential community cleanup day (Lynn Boulton): Partially deferred so that Lynn can be at the discussion, which she requested be about the trash that has been dumped on BIA land near the intersection of Highway 395 and Horse Meadows Road. General discussion about illegal dumping on public land, which is a problem throughout the County.

13. Approval of support letter for pedestrian connection in Lee Vining: Planning grant that, if awarded, would address the pedestrian connection piece that is so far infeasible under Tioga Inn mitigations. Changes to the letter discussed and Elin moved to approve the letter as amended. Bartshe seconded, motion passed unanimously.

14. Discussion on issues related to COVID-19: Mono County is leading the state with our vaccination rate, which may slow if we don't get as many doses as we have received previously. Herd immunity requires 80–85% of population to get vaccinated and nationally about one-third of people will probably decline; Bob doesn't know that rate in our county. To get to a lower tier we need a less than 7% positivity rate; our positivity rate is around 25–30% right now. Don't want inequitable vaccine distribution so if you know anyone in our Indigenous or Latino communities who wants a vaccine you can call 211.

15. Information items:

- Have an RPAC application from Molly DesBaillets
- May-Lundy parcel above and west of Oneida Lake: owner has expressed interest in putting in some non-commercial yurts, had to get in touch with USFS because they would have to helicopter in materials, USFS didn't see an issue with that, next step is to get approval through the County though it's very early in that process, project will likely go to the LDTAC once there's a better idea of the proposal
- Swiggum Hipcamp: not yet in CEQA process yet
- Rea Ranch: in CEQA process

16. Upcoming agenda items:

- Pumice Valley landfill
- Conway Ranch update after the first season of grazing
- Community cleanup item
- Workshop on ADU updates
- Role of the RPAC related to Mono Basin County projects
- Other items of interest: May-Lundy parcel, Highway 167 campground proposals, Tioga Inn, USFS roads near Pumice Plant that SCE closed, Lundy Road winter closure policy

17. Adjourned: 8:53pm