BARRY M. GOLDWATER RANGE EXECUTIVE COUNCIL (BEC)

and

INTERGOVERNMENTAL EXECUTIVE COMMITTEE (IEC)

MEETING MINUTES

1. The meeting was held at the Arizona Game and Fish Office, Region V, Tucson, AZ on January 8th, 2025.

IEC members/representatives present:

56th Range Management Office (56 RMO) Director Chas Buchanan

MCAS Yuma Pat Barber

MCAS Yuma Conservation Manager Randy English

Arizona Game and Fish Dept (AZGFD) – Region IV Supervisor Danielle Klaas

USBP, Wellton Station, Watch Commander Pete Murillo

BEC/IEC Admin:

56 RMO/BEC Intergovernmental Liaison Clinton Boyd

56 RMO/ESM Chief Lisa McCarrick

56 RMO/ESM Public Affairs Anthony Mottola

56 RMO/BEC Administrative Liaison Susan Neal

56 RMO/ESM Archaeologist Adrianne Rankin

Public participants and guests:

Private Citizen from Tucson, Arizona Dinah Bear

Friends of Cabeza Prieta Bill Broyles

Friends of the Sonoran Desert Roger McManus

2. Mr. English chaired the meeting, welcomed everyone, and announced that the purpose of the Intergovernmental Executive Committee (IEC) meeting was to facilitate the exchange of views and information regarding the management of the natural and cultural resources on the BMGR.

3. Environmental Updates:

Pronghorn Update: Ms. Danielle Klaas (AZGFD Region IV Supervisor) discussed the recent range-wide survey which completed on the Sonoran pronghorn from south of Interstate 8, east of the Copper Mountains to Highway 85 and north of the international border. The survey results were 158 pronghorn (12 were in transit, 10 missed and 168 were seen). The estimate was 207 and for comparison the 2022 results were about 211. More pronghorn were found in the southern portion of the range this year likely due to better habit conditions from the summer rains. The annual captures were conducted in December of this year. From the Cabeza captive breeding pen they moved a total of 23 pronghorn into the wild, 16 (5 female and 11 male) were released into Vekol Valley and seven (3 female and 4 males) were released onto Area B of the BMGR East. Unfortunately, one buck was lost in Vekol Valley to a mountain lion the day after it was released into the wild. A total of 12 pronghorn were released from the Kofa captive breeding pen, seven (three female and four males) were released onto the YPG East Arm and five (all males) were released onto the BMGR West. In the Cabeza Prieta pronghorn pen, there is currently 23 pronghorn in the south herd and 21 in the north herd. There are currently 20 pronghorn in the Kofa captive breeding pen and their biologists have been busy with monitoring these newly released pronghorn, preparing for the Kofa subunit survey, providing supplemental water and feed to pronghorn and preparing for the upcoming spring fawn season. Also, coming up in the next couple of months construction of two new pronghorn waters on BMGR West will be taking place.

 Mr. Broyles (Friends of Cabeza Prieta) asked if one of the pronghorn from BMGR Area B wanders onto the Res is it fair game? Mr. English answered for the experimental population the only way they are covered under ESA is if they go onto a wildlife refuge. Ms. McCarrick further explained that if the 10J population in Area B cross the road and go over onto the active military site where the current population of the pronghorn are they are now considered under ESA.

Mr. McManus (Friends of the Sonoran Desert) asked if there is any further interaction about the population from Mexico. Ms. Klaas responded they are in regular communication with Mexico. They are on the recovery team with them. Most of their regular coordination has to do with when they do surveys, when there is a collar that needs to be retrieved and then they have a couple of folks from their agency that worked in our borderlands program that have ongoing communication with Mexico as well. He also asked about any possible interaction between the US population with the Mexican population because of the border wall construction. Ms. Klaas did not have an answer but will follow up with him on that.

4. Law Enforcement Update:

1. AZGFD: Ms. Klaas noted that Mr. Travis Clarkson has been out patrolling and has

some feedback. Their other officer has been out of the field for a little while and will not be returning until March. They just wrapped up sheep hunts and they have archery deer hunts going on. Mr. Clarkson called the sheep hunters before their hunts and let them know they are not permitted to go cross country and hopefully that will help decrease the trespass issues that they have been dealing with in the past. They are continuing to haul lots of water due to lack of rain and that has been a huge priority. Their sector this year has hauled over 400,000 gallons of water to water catchments and they have a helicopter haul scheduled this month to take some water to Thanksgiving Day Tank. There are also a couple of other water catchments or potholes they will be getting water out to in the next couple of weeks. Mr. Clarkson throughout the hunt season has received a lot of positive feedback on RecAccess. Ms Bear (Private citizen with Tucson, Arizona) asked for the time period on when the 400,000 gallons of water were hauled and Ms. Klaas answered that has been since May 6.

1. Wellton Station: Mr. Pete Murillo reported specific to the Wellton Station to encompass

Telegraph Pass Trail to mile marker 78-65 their numbers are down considerably by about

65% compared to last year across the board from rescues, deaths, entries, apprehensions, etc. There have been discussions about sending agents back to Camp Grip, but he does not think there will be a budget anytime soon. They are going to start sending agents down to boundary camp to address their busiest area east of Ajo. Mr. McManus asked about if the new construction on the wall will be electrified as there has been media speculation. Mr. Murillo answered no. He stated they have added about 18 miles west of Monument 193 and will continue eastbound.

1. BMGR East: Mr. Buchanan had no update for law enforcement as it has been extremely

 quiet.

1. BMGR West: Mr. English stated they got their fourth warden back from flexi so they

have a full staff of four.

5. 25 Echo Project: Since they have more climate resilience money, Mr. English noted they have contracted Jacobs Engineering who is working with the Corps of Engineers to come up with a strategy. They are doing a stakeholder’s outreach to try to figure out who needs to be involved and are working with the contractor to figure out at what stage to invite the stakeholder’s in to provide input. Once they have gathered all the necessary data, they will bring in the stakeholders to come up with strategies and work on specific objectives to try to do a pilot project on some portion of the Camino to see how to fix it. Mr. English expects that may be late spring or early summer of this year that they may be ready for the stakeholder meeting. Mr. English emphasized that since this is a climate resilience project the focus is to be able to let the water go from the mountains on the east side, have it flow downstream across the road and be able to feed the vegetation on the downstream side. Right now, the road is interrupting that, so they have to figure out a way to get the water across and still have the road be passable and not to have to maintain it as often. That is why they need the public’s input on how to best do that.

6. Childs Mountain Communication Infrastructure Plan: Mr. Buchanan gave the update on Mr. Morawe’s proposal to minimize the infrastructure on the north peak of Childs Mountain. They are waiting on an official response from the Air Force. The unofficial response is it is approved at the wing level.

7. CAP Counter-Drug operations air space adjustments: Mr. Buchanan reported that Civil Air Patrol is supporting Border Patrol with some of their border monitoring missions and is asking if they can fly further north of the border into the BMGR airspace. It is with the lawyers right now to discuss the actual legalities of doing that.

8. Cultural Resources Update: Ms. Adrianne Rankin, RMO/ESM archaeologist, gave the update on the annual intertribal meeting at the Pueblo Grand Museum on November 20, 2024. They had 21 tribal members attend. On the second day of the meeting, they went on a field trip to the Sauceda Pothole in Area B which is an archaeological site. She gave details on the Aux 8 wattle placement which is almost 200 acres in size, and they have identified three areas where the site is deeply eroded. They have installed 700 feet of wattles to aid in soil erosion. There is still 5,000 feet yet to install in imperiled Area 1. Work is done in-house with funds available. They are also seeking additional Native American involvement and feedback. She also had good news to share about the 56 RMO securing a Section 110 (National Historic Preservation Act) grant for a rock shelter project in Area B for $115,000. Section 110 requires agencies to survey and identify archaeological sites on all the lands that they manage. They plan to record 10 rock shelters, and they will also do some surveys.

9. Agency Progress Report:

 a. BMGR-East: Mr. Buchanan noted it is starting to be invasive species season especially for stinknet and it has been a challenge. Ms. McCarrick with ESM stated that they are losing one of their biologists and then they will be getting another archaeologist and another wildlife biologist.

Mr. Broyles asked how does funding look for the RMOs for the next few years? Mr. Buchanan stated that is a very interesting question because they are split funded. The environmental section of the RMO gets their funding through Air Force Civil Engineering Center (AFCEC) and the operational side gets their funding through appropriated funds. He emphasized it has been hard to work under continuing resolutions. He notes they will not see new start up type money until right before the end of the year. Mr. English noted it has been a steady state for them also. He discussed that if their environmental budget should be cut, they have lease money set aside for agriculture. They have 1500 acres of agricultural fields that they lease around their airfield which contributes into a big pot of Navy agriculture money which is then doled back out to the installations and because they are one of the biggest contributors they usually get a big chunk of that back. That money can only be used for natural resources.

Mr. Broyles asked Mr. English about the outcome of the land swap to protect the flat-tail horned lizard. Mr. English noted it is not necessarily a land swap. In 2020 when they put in the secondary barrier on the BMGR West they disturbed 867 acres of flat tailed habitat so they are trying to compensate for that by trying to acquire some land north of their boundary. The problem is that it is state land and they can’t just go buy it from them. It has to be done through an auction process. The military is not buying the land. They are using the refuge program where they give the money to an NGO and they purchase it, keep the deed and put in a perpetual conservation easement. They are still trying to do that. They just haven’t gotten their yet.

b. BMGR-West: Mr. English reported that WTI will start 25 March and run through

30 April. They are working on an MOU with Border Patrol Yuma sector to formalize the equipment they have out there. They also found some fossilized remnants of a woolly mammoth out on the Mohawk Dunes. Mr. English gave the RecAccess statistics for 2024. He noted as of 31 December 2024 they had a cumulative total of 15,025 accounts. They started RecAccess two years ago so between January 2024 and December 31, 2024 they have issued 9,727 permits and during those same dates last year they have 17,182 check-ins. He states RecAccess is working better than iSportsman.

 c. AZGFD: Ms. Klaas had nothing additional to add.

1. Border Patrol: Mr. Murillo stated there is a lot of speculation about changes on the

horizon. They have about 20% of their workforce still working in the processing centers in Yuma to assist Tucson and the neighboring San Diego sector. The workforce currently in Wellton consists of about 40% new agents and they are working on getting them trained.

Mr. English asked when their agents are out on patrol on the BMGR West how do they navigate on the roads out there? He asked if they have work phones or personal phones with apps on them. Mr. Murillo replied that they recently transitioned to ATAK so they now have GPS and the current apps. Mr. English asked if there was a way to upload their current maps of the legal roads to their apps. Mr. Murillo replied that he would talk to their IT dept. and see what is available.

10. Public Participant Inputs:

a. Mr. Roger McManus noted Mr. English will send him some information for 25 Echo.

1. Ms. Dinah Bear had no additional questions.
2. Mr. Broyles emphasized that the Barry M. Goldwater Range (BMGR) will be 90 years old

in 2031, but it is hard to find any books detailing its rich history.

11. Action Item Review:

1. Mr. English will provide some information to Mr. McManus for 25 Echo.
2. Mr. Buchanan will look into the ATAK map/layer upload.
3. Mr. Buchanan developing a flyer to post in lodging in Gila Bend or post something on

RecAccess.

12. The next BEC-IEC will take place on May 14th, 2025, in Ajo, Arizona.

13. Mr. English expressed appreciation to the public for their participation and inputs. The IEC meeting adjourned at 6:42 p.m.



 SUSAN D. NEAL, GS-6, DAF

 BEC Recorder



 CHARLES E. BUCHANAN, GS-14, DAF

 DIRECTOR, 56 Range Management Office