

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 IV, Yuma, AZ on September 13th, 2023.

IEC members/representatives present:

56th Range Management Office (56 RMO) Director	Chas Buchanan
Marine Corps Air Station (MCAS) Yuma Conservation Manager	Randy English
Arizona Game and Fish Department (AZGFD) – Region IV Supervisor	Mike Sumner
AZGFD Region IV Field Supervisor	Mike Rice
Marine Corps Air Station (MCAS) Yuma Range Department	Jeremy Pennell
Marine Corps Air Station (MCAS) Yuma Range Department	William Sellars
Marine Corps Air Station (MCAS) Yuma Range Department	Blake Hash
CPNWR Manager	Rijk Morawe
ORPI Superintendent	Scott Stonum
USBP Wellton Station PLLA	Ross Andres
Yuma Sector Public Lands Liaison Agent (PLLA)	Bryon Strom

BEC/IEC Admin:

56 RMO BEC Coordinator	Kevin O'Berry
56 RMO BEC Administrative Liaison	Susan Neal

Public participants and guests:

Friends of the Sonoran	Roger McManus
Private Citizen	Dinah Bear
Cellular Rescue	Laura Hunter
Cellular Rescue	John Hunter

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. Introductions were made. Ms. Dinah Bear, Mr. Roger McManus, Mr. Scott Stonum and Mr. Rijk Morawe attended the meeting by Microsoft Teams over the phone.

3. Environmental Updates: Mr. Rice noted there was another buck mortality for the pronghorn transferred to Mexico last year, so they are now at two does left from the herd taken to Mexico. They are continuing to see mountain lion predation on the Vekol Valley herd.

They are getting ready for the annual pronghorn capture/release with the captures the second and third weeks in December. They have a new pronghorn lead for the Arizona Game and Fish Department. The captive breeding pen will be down one person until they get that position backfilled. As far as habitat conditions, they saw a lot more rain on the BMGR West this past

monsoon season whereas BMGR East is a lot drier. Mr. Buchanan asked for the date of their next telemetry flight. Mr. Rice does not know when that is scheduled, but he will let Mr. Buchanan know when he has a date.

4. Law Enforcement Update: Mr. Strom noted that if you watched the national news that murder suspect in Pennsylvania was captured this morning by a national Border Tactical team.

Yuma Sector wide, apprehensions are down 45% this fiscal year which has been good for them. They are still at 170,000 apprehensions this fiscal year which ends at the end of this month in comparison to 302,000 last year. Hurricane Hilary, which came through a couple weeks ago caused some infrastructure damage on the BMGR West leaving a vulnerability near Monument 193. Their crews went out and did the repairs. They will go do some more repairs along the roads on the Cabeza Prieta once funding and time allow. Their seizures are up and down:

- Marijuana obviously is down 71% in comparison to last year.
- Cocaine, Methamphetamines, and Fentanyl were way up on all three. Cocaine not a lot with 37 pounds so far this fiscal year. Meth is up to 150% at 434 pounds this year compared to 174 last year and the scary number is fentanyl. They are at 660 pounds which shows an 889% increase in fentanyl seizures.

Deaths are down sector wide this year.

Mr. Andres notes the trends/numbers for Yuma sector obviously flow with Wellton. Their apprehensions are slightly down (not quite as dramatically as Yuma Station), but their rescues and drug seizures are way up and the deaths are way down.

Mr. English added that he appreciated Mr. Strom coordinating with them for the emergency fix to the wall from the hurricane. Mr. Strom discussed the email sent out on sector wide training on how to operate on the range in a less destructive manner. Mr. Andres stated they have initiated monthly training by sending out an email with power point slides for supervisors and agents highlighting dos and don'ts. Embedded in the material are general practices of responsible driving, dragging and range access. They have been doing it for the past couple of months mainly spurred by an ATV incident which they want to avoid in the future.

5. Cellular Rescue Proposal on BMGR-E: Laura and John Hunter asked for help and support to put up two cell towers to cut down on the deaths happening on the BMGR-East and Cabeza Prieta. Mr. Hunter noted there have been over 600 deaths in this area on the BMGR-East and Cabeza Prieta. They are proposing two cell towers. They went last week to see Congressman Grijalva but he was called away on an environmental issue. As they missed him, they left brochures for him to look over to explain their project. Cell tower #1 is on BMGR East near the Uken Tank and 20 miles south is location #2 on Cabeza Prieta along the Devil's Highway. Mr. Buchanan commented that the only hurdle he has found is with real estate as it deals with cell phone infrastructure on a military reservation and stated he does not understand all the rules or what the restrictions are, so they are working through that right now. Mr. Morawe stated that it would be problematic to add a new structure. Mr. Hunter asked if he would accept the possibility of putting up a bank of cell antennas providing 360-degree coverage on the existing 180-foot tower. Mr. Morawe responded that it would be fine on the existing tower. Mr. English

noted before the next IEC meeting which is in January maybe they should touch base with Mr. Morawe and Mr. Buchanan and give an update during the next meeting.

6. RecAccess Program Update: Mr. Blake Hash stated they implemented their new permitting system, “RecAccess” online at BMGR.RecAccess.com. Currently they have almost 1600 accounts since March and about 535 people have checked in. They have had minimal phone calls compared to their last permitting system. Mr Hash indicated they uploaded updated maps to the site or can be picked up at the Gila Bend Auxiliary Gate, Cabeza Prieta headquarters in Ajo, the BLM, Arizona Game and Fish office, and the MCAS Yuma main gate.

7. Agency Progress Reports:

a. AZGFD: Nothing new to add.

b. Border Patrol: Nothing new to add.

c. BMGR-East: Mr. Buchanan stated that the biggest thing that he has related to BMGR, both East and West, is they are going through the five-year formal review of the INRMP. The draft report is out for final public review and comment. He also noted it has been a dry summer with several fires but only one serious fire where they needed BLMs help.

d. BMGR-West: Mr. Pennell noted they are setting up for WTI. The first fly day for WTI is the 27th of September and that will go through the 28th of October. Just like in years past they will send out an email with closures. They recently (two weeks ago), issued a contract for design on how to repair “25 Echo” road damage. They are working with a design team to go out and collect all the necessary data, soil profiles and hydrology to develop a phased approach with cost estimates on how to tackle this project. He gave them a tough list of demands that he wanted within the scope of work--first and foremost they wanted to restore the hydrology across the Camino and make sure that if it does rain that the waters are flowing to where they have historically for many years, and it is going to the right places. He wanted the design to include ways to reduce maintenance and asked for the road to look as primitive as possible. He plans to bring the project managers from the engineering team to an IEC meeting to hear from the public stakeholders and different design elements that they might like to see. Roger McManus stated he is looking forward to the written comment that will be circulated later as it is difficult to hear the meeting over the phone.

e. Cabeza Prieta: Mr. Morawe noted they are working towards getting back to the Comprehensive Conservation Plan from 2007, such as reducing the number of caravans to no more than four vehicles and no trailers within the Cabeza at all. However, they are considering the allowance of a small stock trailer to access the Tule Well area but that would be it—it’s just inappropriate to have trailers in the designated wilderness area.

f. ORPI: Mr. Scott Stonum noted it is hard for him to follow the conversation because there is a lot of echo in the room as he is on the phone. Regarding the surging asylum seekers, it has been an incredibly challenging situation along their southern border. He wanted to thank Border Patrol for their collaboration.

8. Public Participant Inputs:


- a. Ms. Dinah Bear stated she will have to follow up individually as she attended over the phone, and she could not hear very well.
- b. Mr. McManus stated he is looking forward to the written report as he could not hear very well either as he attended over the phone. He also encouraged more members of the public to attend the IEC meetings.


9. Action Item Review:

- a. Mr. O'Berry stated that they will continue to coordinate at all levels the Cellular Rescue project. He stated the agencies do support better cell phone coverage out there for all the reasons stated plus our own personal safety.
- b. Future presentation regarding the technical solution for the 25 Echo project. Mr. Pennell stated that they could have it ready for either the January or May IEC meeting.
- c. Mr. O'Berry commented on the BMGR-East field trip just this past week with Border Patrol. Border Patrol is looking to use a two-mile section of an existing two track south of the Granite Mountain Forage Plot that terminates at the Cabeza boundary. 56 RMO is assessing the ability to codify the road segment as administrative in order to accommodate Border Patrol.

10. The next BEC-IEC will take place on January 10th, 2024, at 5:30 p.m. in Tucson AZGFD.

11. Mr. English expressed appreciation to the public for their participation and inputs. The IEC meeting adjourned at 6:27 p.m.


SUSAN D. NEAL, GS-6, DAF
BEC Recorder


CHARLES E. BUCHANAN, GS-14, DAF
DIRECTOR, 56 Range Management Office