

**Mono Basin Regional Planning Advisory Committee**  
**Meeting Minutes**  
**Wednesday, January 13, 2021, 6:30pm**  
**remote/virtual meeting via Zoom/conference call**

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

**Public attendees & presenters:** Bob Gardner, Wendy Sugimura, Bentley Regehr, Pam Smitheman, Paul Ashby, Lynn Boulton, Margaret Eissler, Ilene Mandelbaum, Dave Marquart, Gordon Martin, Paul McFarland, Connie Millar, Matt Paruolo, Ray Pok, Jim Tabb, Ben Trefry, Jack Trefry, Barbara Wanner, Jeff Wyneken

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

**2. Public comment:** Jim Tabb, Barbara Wanner, Ben Trefry, and Jack Trefry asked why the Lundy Road gates are open this winter and why the road is being plowed/cleared to the resort; expressed concerns about safety and environmental impacts; in support of closing the gates to allow for winter recreation and give resources and animals a break from heavy visitor use. Bartshe and Lisa recommended agendizing this item for February's RPAC meeting; Bob said County staff will check with the Public Works department about it.

**3. Review minutes from November 18, 2020 meeting:** Correct the spelling of Robert Di Paolo's last name. Duncan moved to approve with the correction, Lisa seconded, motion passed unanimously.

**4. Supervisor Gardner's report:** Met with Lesley Yen, the new Inyo National Forest Supervisor: She is supportive of more attention being paid to the Mono Basin, including assigning a Mono District Ranger; she agreed to meet about dispersed camping, ATV use, and how future forest closures would be handled; she has visited the DeChambeau Ponds. Met with Ryan Dermody, Caltrans District 9 Director: Please use the Caltrans portal for getting in touch with Caltrans; Ryan thought the RPAC and Mono Basin community was not supportive of a roundabout at the intersection of Highways 395 and 120W but Bob isn't sure that's the feeling (may need to agendize). Another Tioga Inn meeting took place on December 15, 2020: A decision about the project was not made; there were concerns about consultation with Kutzadika'a Tribe. Bob wants to meet with Yosemite Superintendent Muldoon about Tioga Road opening schedules. We need more Mono Basin RPAC members; Bob has some ideas but would welcome more.

**5. Chair's report:** Pleased to see that the speed meter at the north end of Lee Vining is working. Had a request from a neighbor for more discussion about the proposed campground off of Highway 167. Dave Swisher, chair of the Mono City Fire Commission, made a video of how to use the "crash gates" on the Mono City escape routes; let Duncan know if you'd like the video.

**6. Members' reports:**

**Elin:** Attended the Tioga Inn meeting and the recent LDTAC meeting.

**Lisa:** Attended recent LDTAC meeting to listen to the Rea Ranch proposal; attended the Tioga Inn hearing; attended the Mono Basin Fire Safe Council meeting.

**Chris:** Requested not to be reappointed to RPAC this year because of the conflict it created.

**Bartshe:** Attended the Tioga Inn meeting and LDTAC meeting. The first comment period has closed on the Mono Basin Water Rights Licenses project (Grant Lake spillway); the State Water Board will make another comment period available on the amended licenses; could be approved by LADWP Commissioners between April and June; would mean the Grant Lake spillway would be modified to install a proper outlet there to allow peak flows to be released from Grant Lake that approach historical peak flows and better achieve restoration for Rush Creek. The DeChambeau Ponds hot pipe replacement project is largely put together; really exciting because hot water will run through the pipe to Pond #1 (last time water reached it was 2009); thanks to the DeChambeau Creek Foundation, Chris Lizza, and the Mono Lake Committee for contributing funds to make it happen; Inyo National Forest has been a great partner; community members have been out there donating time, energy, expertise, equipment; looking forward to getting the ponds functioning like they used to with the artesian water.

**7. RPAC officer nominations:** Duncan remarked that since we've lost three members recently we need more; have reached out to people in the community with no nibbles yet; if you're a regular attendee please consider applying to join the RPAC.

- Bartshe nominates Elin for Secretary
- Bartshe nominates Duncan for Chair
- Duncan nominates Lisa for Vice-Chair
- Voting will take place next month

**8. Inyo National Forest update (Gordon Martin):** Pleased with all the help and volunteer hours for repairing the pipe out at DeChambeau Ponds. Looking at moving another district ranger to the Mono district so Gordon would no longer supervise both districts. Should have a new forester here in another month, plus a replacement for the mountain sports specialist, working on a second recreation officer to support Lawson, also working on getting an assistant recreation officer and a special use permit administrator. Sheila Irons has taken a position with USFS Region 5 but will be working remotely from the Bishop office. No determination yet about whether the Mono Basin Visitor Center will be open this season; Bob remarked that he'll be working with the Inyo to see if ESIA and volunteers can have bookstore open. South Tufa was reopened last week; working on an order to close the dirt roads in the area except the two main roads; installing barriers along all roads to prevent people from driving off the roads. Cassandra Dufek will be managing both Mono Basin and Mammoth Visitor Centers again.

**9. Mono Basin Fire Safe Council:** Dave Swisher's video for using the breakaway gates is helpful. Bob spoke with Tony Dublino about the BLM road that leaves Mono City to the east; asked if Mono County could contact BLM to say Mono County will be improving it but no; need to contact BLM and ask them to do it. Discussion at the meeting about grant applications and opportunities with John Hicks of Twin Lakes area and their experience with grants. Sheriff Braun was helpful in describing the Code Red protocols and Dave Swisher will put together document about those procedures. Discussion about the firebreak on USFS land to the south of Mono City; Annamaria Echeverria from the Inyo National Forest was going to do a field trip tomorrow to help determine how much of a fire break is needed.

**10. Discussion on the Lee Vining SCE Substation (Ray Pok):** Doing wrap-up before a winter construction break. Working on concrete for a drainage swale, perimeter fencing, hydro seeding happened last fall. Will start work again in March to work on completion by mid-June. Responses to questions from RPAC and public:

- Concrete along Highway 395 is for drainage, not a footpath.
- Concrete directs drainage into the swale so it doesn't go into Lee Vining Creek.

- Public access to the property will remain. Power lines near the Pumice Plant will not be undergrounded but the transformer up there is temporary and will be removed.
- The large fenced area across Highway 395 from the substation is permanent; was called out on the original site plan but the size was not accurate; equipment is the pole-top transformer equipment that had to go somewhere when the lines went underground under the highway; design alternative is to put them atop the wooden poles instead of on the ground and that is not very popular; another alternative is an underground vault that is too much ground disturbance; least obtrusive is the way it is now; discussed vegetation to disguise it; razor wire is the design standard required for public safety to keep people and animals out of the facility; alternative is a higher fence and Ray will find out how much higher it would have to be; Ray will also find out if signs could take the place of the razor wire.
- Grading cannot be terraced; shot-crete will be used to stabilize the creek bank near the powerhouse.

**11. Discussion on capital improvement/outlay projects for potential funding under Proposition 68: Per Capita Agreement (Matt Paruolo, Pam Smitheman):** Mono County was allocated \$400,000 under Prop 68 for rehabbing parks. The Board of Supervisors has directed that the funds manage and rehab County-owned lands; projects on federally-managed lands need a land tenure agreement to get the grant. Applications for projects can be submitted through 2021; projects must be completed by end of 2023. Funds cannot be used for repairs or routine maintenance but can be used for capital improvements; for example, can't use it to fill a hole or replace roof tiles, but replacing the whole roof is allowed. Two projects brought forward already are an inclusive play area at Mono Lake County Park and more formal recreation facilities at Conway Ranch.

- Paul McFarland: For Hess Park, would like to propose a simple skate park like original Shady Rest skate park and installation of exercise courses like those at Bishop Creek Park; resurfacing the enclosed tennis courts at Hess Park would stretch the dollars and make the tennis courts multi-use
- Discussion about Conway Ranch recreational trails idea: Property has multiple goals it's trying to achieve – people hunt out there, designated wildlife corridors and habitat, etc. There will be rural recreation funding opportunities coming through Prop 68 as well so Matt would like to explore Conway Ranch opportunities with the community and the RPAC; looking at connections with the community is great, Mono City specifically. Funds could possibly go toward the Conway Ranch buildings that need restoring; “recreation” is a nebulous term but fundable projects will yield some sort of infrastructure improvements, so restoring the buildings could fit in, especially with interpretation and education.
- Matt will be bringing possible projects to the BOS for discussion in February/March and then bring them back to the RPACs.

**12. Discussion on issues related COVID-19:** Mono County has had 780 cases, 95 of which are in central/north county; 4 deaths, one of which is in central/north county. Rate of increase leveled out for a while and has increased again because of the holidays. We're still in the SoCal Region with the stay-at-home order but County sent a letter to the Governor asking to be transferred to the Sacramento region or put in a separate region; haven't heard back about that yet. State ICU bed capacity isn't expected to get better until the end of January.

**13. Information items:**

- **Grant opportunity for connecting the Tioga Inn site with Lee Vining:** Would the RPAC write a letter of support? Discussion about whether or not this funding would interfere with Tioga Inn developer's obligations or with the Caltrans Lee Vining rehab project. Mono County was awarded another of these grants to explore multi-modal options along Highway 158 so may not be competitive for another grant so soon.
- **Rea Ranch project:** Sign up for LDTAC and Planning Commission updates for opportunities for public comment. It will go before the Planning Commission and then the Board of Supervisors for a proposed General Plan amendment to change the land use designation from Resource Management to Rural Resort to allow up to 40 campsites, ATV track with rentals, an event space. Assuming the designation change is approved, use permit application just goes to the Planning Commission. At Monday's LDTAC meeting the application was accepted and then the County hires a CEQA consultant to complete that process. The General Plan amendment and use permit could go to the Planning Commission together. Expect it to come before the Planning Commission and Board of Supervisors in late spring.
- **Swiggum project:** Proposal for 3 campsites; may be processing the General Plan amendment and use permit at the Planning Commission at the same time.

**14. Upcoming agenda items:** Election of officers, Chapter 16 accessory dwelling unit workshop, housing subcommittee, discussion on a potential community cleanup day, Lundy Road gates and plowing with Mono County Public Works staff in attendance, support letter for trail connector.

**14. Adjourned:** 8:24pm

Respectfully submitted by Elin Ljung, Secretary.