

March 5, 2025
COUNTY OF SAN DIEGO, BORREGO SPRINGS COMMUNITY SPONSOR GROUP

***** Approved Minutes*****

THE PUBLIC IS ALWAYS WELCOME TO OUR MEETINGS
WE REPRESENT YOU WHEN ADVISING THE COUNTY OF SAN DIEGO ON LAND USE ISSUES

A. CALL TO ORDER/ROLL CALL

John Peterson, Chair	Present
Jim Dax, Vice-Chair	Present
Bill Berkley	Present
Bruce Durbin	Present
Bill Haneline	Present
Rebecca Falk	Present
Nancy McRae	Present
Seat #7 - Vacant	To be filled by Anne O'Connor during "Action Items" part of this meeting
Seat #5 - Vacant	

B. APPROVAL OF MINUTES FOR THE MEETING of January 8, 2025

Motion	Rebecca Falk
Second	Bill Berkley
Approved	Approve - 6 votes; Abstain - Bill Haneline; 2 seats vacant/non-voting

C. PUBLIC COMMUNICATION (will be limited to 3 min): Opportunity for members of the public to speak to the Group on any subject matter within the Group's authority that is not on the posted agenda.

Rebecca Falk - wants to make public aware of survey on County website: <https://engage.sandiegocounty.gov/> to communicate with County on things they want public comment on. Survey is quick to take and only open until 3/10/25.

Becky Rapp - Spoke about draft EIR for cannabis extension into back country. County held 3 forums on Zoom, 2 in person. Draft available for review and comment until 3/31. Areas of concern: 1) County put together a committee of residents to discuss expansion of marijuana industry into backcountry. Each supervisor is allowed to appoint one person, but they don't have to be from the backcountry. Rapp feels this is a disservice to people living in the backcountry and that committee members should be from backcountry. 2) Draft suggests to expand from 5 to 20 pot shops, allows indoor and outdoor cultivation, there no explanation of how that will affect residents regarding odor. Cited example of Carpinteria becoming the poster child for what NOT to do for bringing marijuana to the back country. Recently Santa Barbara County Board of Supervisors voted 5 -0 to recommend that all indoor growers install state-of-the-art clean air technology after receiving over 4,000 odor complaints. Residents need to be aware of problem and it needs to be included in the draft. She will send email to John who will send to community.

Elizabeth Rodriguez - Q: is BS on the map to have pot growers? Rapp - A: No locations have been slated yet. She is recommending that individual EIRs be required based on what land is being utilized since there is so much diversity in types of backcountry land.

Anne O'Connor- Q: What is Rapp's position with County? Rapp - A: Not with County, a Resident of SD County. Advocate for drug prevention, especially with youth, and clean air.

D. ACTION ITEMS:

1. Appointment of Anne O'Connor to vacant seat #7. John Peterson stated that Anne completed training, so she was welcomed by all members to join us at the table. Seat #7 is now filled.
2. Interview of Potential Candidates for Sponsor Group vacate seat #5. (Took place after Non-Action Items in Group Business)

E. NON-ACTION ITEMS:

1. Presentation via Zoom from Stephanie Neal County, Project Manager, Multiple Species Conservation Program (MSCP) for North San Diego County which includes northwest portion of unincorporated areas, Ramona and Julian. Received funding this year to do analysis of plan for east county, which includes Borrego Springs.

Michael Blackmun: Planner in Sustainability Division, leading County's East County plan analysis. Presented power point:

Slide 2 and Commentary: Multiple Species Conservation Program (MSCP)

- o MSCP Background -
- o Program Benefits
- o Federal & State Regulations
 - East County Plan
- o Status Update & Approach Analysis

County balances protection of species and habitat with recreation and development. Purpose of MSCP is to streamline development process. Rather than negotiating with federal and state agencies on a case by case basis, MSCP allows applicant to receive approval directly from county. Endangered Species Act, administered by Federal and California Fish and Wildlife agencies. It's purpose is to conserve plant and animal species at risk of extinction, threatened or expected to become threatened. Developers cannot "take" habitat.

Slide 3 & 4 and Commentary:

- Long-term, regional habitat conservation program
- Balance protection of biological resources with development and infrastructure
- Streamlines development process

There are 3 MSCP areas in County: North, South, East. Of the 2.9M acres in County, 2.2M acres is unincorporated; 65% is tribal, military, state and federally owned lands, so the county has land use jurisdiction over about 35% of unincorporated land = 772,239 acres. Draft East County Plan Area encompasses 1.2M acres of which 20% is within County jurisdiction.

Slide 5 - Anticipated Benefits

Community: Simplifies compliance with federal and state laws on endangered species, local level decision making, preserves a balance of scenic landscapes, natural features and the built environment.

Economic: Reduces project processing costs and approval timelines; provides fair compensation to willing landowners for permanent protection of resources on their land.

Environmental: Protects large blocks of species habitat and wildlife corridors, comprehensive and consistent long-term management and monitoring

Slide 6 & 7 - Fed and State Endangered Species Act

Purpose: Conserve and protect plant and animal species at risk of extinction and the ecosystems upon which they depend. Includes species already listed as treated or endangered, and those in decline that might become listed in the future.

"Take": Under the laws, cannot "take" listed species or remove habitat of a listed species. "Take" means to harm, harass, or kill a species and includes removing habitat. Compliance: Development projects or other activities must obtain an Incidental Take Permit (ITP) to move forward when impacting listed species and habitat. ITP process can be very lengthy and expensive. Requires a Habitat Conservation Plan (HCP) and a Natural Community Conservation Plan (NCCP). Fed and State Fish and Wildlife agencies issue ITP. Does not replace CEQA requirements.

Slide 8 - East County Plan Approach

Funding allocated in 24/25 to begin MSCP process. Review benefit of regional conservation plan based on community needs, 2) evaluate draft species list, preserve design and other work performed to date (existing conditions assessment), 3) identify, assess and present analysis, 4) present report and recommending strategies to proceed at BOS hearing.

Slide 9 - Contact Info:

Michael Blackmun, 858.505.6677, mscp@sdcounty.ca.gov; project website is www.sandiegocounty.gov/pds/mscp/ec

Q&A

Jim Dax - Timeline? A: Must bring on consultant by end of year to retain funding.

Bruce Durbin - Ensure corridors and habitats will remain open and healthy but theres a battle in the backcountry towns between housing supply and short term rentals. If the county is not going to allow for more housing,

workforce housing in unavailable in Julian. Will the plan further constrict housing? A: Intent of MCSP is to make development process happen more quickly. MCSP pre-negotiates everything, puts into a plan and developer follows requirements, permits are issued. Intent is not to restrict housing.

Rebecca Falk - Once county has ITP, can board issue exceptions? A: There is flexibility, if there is an avoidance measure, you can make argument to BOS and they will make exceptions. Q: When east county MSCP happened a decade ago, the line was east of Borrego Valley road - are you starting from scratch or is old info and discussion being considered? A: In 2006 independent science advisors helped develop draft lists, they will go back and review those, not starting from scratch, nothing is set in stone. Meant to align with general plan.

MP (member of the public): Is ABDSP a stakeholder in this? Will they have a seat at the table? A: Typically plans only regulate private land, but doesn't mean that lands owned publicly can't participate. East County plan had a steering committee, and will probably continue that.

MP: Will this affect Rams Hill development? Will this program be working with that? A: Because it's already being processed, Rams Hill is working directly with agencies.

Bruce Durbin - Tribal lands not part of plan, but tribes are doing conservation plans also

Bill Haneline - Is there a list of covered species online? A: Yes, draft list online, will circulate link.

MP (Bri Fordem, ABF) - How is MSCP connected to community plans if at all? Community Plan requires a buffer between development and state park A: Aligns with community plan, intent is not change the rules or development patterns, density, etc. - just to streamline process. Q: Is there a refresh cycle once the plan is completed? A: Submit annual reports to state and fed gov, updates on covered species, adaptive management component allows amendments and changes to adapt to needs. Stephanie Neal will reach out to Bri Fordham to begin coordinate dialog.

John Peterson: Requested digital copy of presentation to distribute to the community; Blackmun agreed to email to him.

2. Report from Bri Fordem regarding report from the Stewardship Committee.

Want to present deliverables, sent John Peterson 2 items: [FAQ brochure](#) (not for feedback), but brochure will be mailed before the end of March to every customer in the water district and posted on the Stewardship website. It covers status of water in the valley. [White paper](#) has been viewed by the water district and water master board, input already incorporated, final review by water district and then opening up to the public for questions and feedback; doc is to be used by decision makers, Sponsor Group, community, wants it to be a resource tool, compilation of all info/meetings/etc. Not looking for a red-lining, but rather look at content - is it a helpful resource tool? 66 pages, but want it to be searchable.

Falk - Q: How much time until its finalized? A: Would like to post final doc by end of March. Wants feedback by end of next two weeks. Q: Falk wishes there was more time. A: Extreme circumstances - the grant manager left the project, the main author fell ill and couldn't work until turn of year. End of grant is March 30 and have to have this done by then.

Peterson: Requested digital copy of draft white paper and associated documents to distribute to the community; Fordem agreed to email to him.

3. Report from the Revitalization Committee meeting with Sup Jim Desmond. Jim Dax reporting.

Meeting on 1/23, well attended, All four areas were present Betsy Knack - Econ develop, Bruce Kelly - Healthcare, Tammy Baker - Environmental, Marsha Boring - infrastructure, new curbs on Palm Canyon. Encourages people to go to quarterly meetings.

F: GROUP BUSINESS:

1. Interview of Karen Williams (in person) and Shrinda Gamache (Dr. G, via Zoom) candidates for vacant seat #5.

Both candidates had been given the same 5 questions. 1) connection to Borrego? 2) education and background valuable to position? 3) Why the interest in serving? 4) Can you give 8 hours/mo? 5) How do you handle conflict?

Dr. G, Shrinda Gamache: 1) she's invested in BS, born in SD, when she came back to live, this is where she wanted to be, city girl but this is the place that changed that vision for her 2) When she was a journalist she covered a community newspaper in NJ, went to council meetings, wrote from the perspective of the community or sometimes the council, analyze and solve problems, clinical settings, must work as a team, must communicate effectively to colleagues and patients, understand who your audience is and speak from that jargon, works in sales, helps

business owners streamline their businesses to succeed, looks at financial statements, interpersonal skills, negotiations, close the deal so all parties benefit 3) I can contribute my expertise, I want to expand my network, make positive impact, influence decisions, develop new skills, gain new insights and be in the know, beyond just living in the community, sees the importance of being a part of something like this. 4) Yes, 5) doesn't expect everyone to agree, every opinion is valuable, always leave room to agree to disagree, compromise, wants to destigmatize conflict - its good to have conflict, it allows you to engage.

Haneline - Q: What is your doctor title based on? A: Doctor of eastern medicine, herbal, acupuncture

Dax - Q: how long in BS? A: 2020 bought land in BS, moved down to valley in 2022

Falk - Q: is this the first SG meeting you've attended? A: Yes, has a better understanding of the SG now. Q: After sitting through this meeting, does it feel comfortable for you? A: I'm going to be observing and absorbing because its all new for her, but its so interesting. Wow I want to be a part of this. Sees herself doing this for 10 years.

McRae - Q: What other groups in town have you become involved in? A: CRC - when there's a power shut off, provide resources and comfort, supplies to get community through difficult period of time, also just became community notary, has plans to do community acupuncture pop-ups

Falk- Q: Do you live in a house here? A: She and husband are building a tiny home here. She got all the permits from the County herself.

Karen Williams: 1) Moved to SD when she was a year old, the family came out here to BS every summer, got married and had kids and had trailer across from Iron Door bar, loved the peace and quiet, sold house in SD 2 years ago, and brought property here to build, currently renting in Ocotillo Wells (OW). 2) Teacher in La Mesa, now a tax accountant, research, try to find new answers for old problems, grant writing, 3) Yes. Type A personality, easy to devote the time. 4) In order to make a full, informed decision, listen to every opinion, that also validates their opinion. O'Connor - Q: How did you learn about opening? A: Read in Borrego Sun. Wants to get more integrated into community. Goes to CRC. Did lots of fundraising for the school she taught at.

Dax - Q: Will you stay in OW or move here?. A: Can't put a shipping container in BS. Waiting to build.

Falk - Q: You moved here 2/11/23. This is first meeting? A: No came to last one. Q: Concerned about principal areas of interest written on application. This group will not give you a platform for homelessness. A: Also interested in being an intern for Desmond or DeMaio. Frustrating to deal with building department. She has to build a triplex on the lot she bought.

Haneline: Your frustrations can't be the platform. When development projects come through, we have influence, but no power. A: No intention of using SG to be her platform. She is a law-follower.

Falk: Everything we deal with is BS, not OW. Helps to know people in Borrego. A: I've been here for 2 years, has been going to CRC, goes to yoga, events at library.

Berkley: Renting in OW, own in BS, - all you have to do is own property.

Durbin: From a value standpoint, people in BS have different view of outdoor recreation than OW. A: I am part of the community. I live here and own property. But it's ignorant to say that everyone in OW has a different view of outdoor recreation.

END OF INTERVIEWS - SPONSOR GROUP COMMENTS BELOW

Dax - do we need to approve either candidate? Falk agrees. Doesn't know enough about either candidate. Would like to see them come to some more meetings. Dax: He attended meetings for over 1 1/2 years before he was voted on. Haneline feels the same way.

Motion: Made by Falk - Decline both candidates at this time and invite them to attend future meetings to enable them to learn more about our work.

Second: Haneline

Approved: Unanimous (8 votes, 1 seat vacant)

2. Subcommittee Reports: None

4. Meeting Updates: None

5. Correspondence received: SDGE regarding microgrid. The generators have been installed and in final stage of commissioning. Once accepted, next phase will be to test battery. Operational in Q2 2025.

G. ADJOURNMENT

Motion - Dax,

Second - Berkley

Approved - Unanimous. Meeting adjourned at 6:39

The next regular meeting is scheduled for April 2, 2025.

The Chair has appointed the following BSCSG Members to serve as points of contact for the following areas:

- a) Road Maintenance, Bill Haneline
- b) Dark Sky Ordinance and issues, Rebecca Falk
- c) Association of Planning Groups, Jim Dax
- d) Landscaping at the La Casa Solar Panel Field, Bill Haneline

Emails sent to the Chair at peterpersonenv@hotmail.com will be forwarded to the appropriate person.

Potential topics for the April 2 SG meeting are: 1) Update from SDG&E on improvements to the microgrid.