

# COUNTY OF INYO NATURAL RESOURCE ADVISORY COMMITTEE

## MINUTES OF NOVEMBER 20, 2013 MEETING

### MEMBERS:

DAVID GERMAN (VICE-CHAIR)  
DOUG THOMPSON  
RANDI PRITCHARD  
DANA JEFFRIES  
WALTER SHARER (CHAIR)

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### ALTERNATES:

JAEL HOFFMAN  
VACANT

### STAFF:

JOSHUA HART, AICP  
NOLAN BOBROFF

PLANNING DIRECTOR  
PLANNING STAFF

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The Inyo County Natural Resource Advisory Committee (NRAC) met on Wednesday, November 20, 2013, at the Inyo County Water Department, 135 South Jackson Street, Independence, CA 93526 and at a satellite location at the Jill Kinmont Boothe School, George Lozito Conference Room, 166 Grandview Drive, Bishop, CA 93514.

Walter Sharer, Chair opened the meeting at 6:03 p.m.

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**ITEM 1: ROLL CALL** – Members in attendance: David German, Doug Thompson, Walter Sharer and Alternate Jael Hoffman.

Also present was Josh Hart, Planning Director; Nolan Bobroff, Planning Staff; Cathreen Richards, Senior Planner.

**ITEM 2: PLEDGE OF ALLEGIANCE**

**ITEM 3: PUBLIC COMMENT PERIOD** – This was the opportunity for anyone in the audience to address the Committee on any related subject that was not scheduled on the Agenda.

There was no one from the public wishing to comment on any items not on the Agenda.

**ITEM 4: APPROVAL OF MINUTES** – Approval of Minutes from August 8, 2013.

**MOTION:** Moved by Jael Hoffman to approve the minutes with one minor change. The motion was seconded by Doug Thompson.

The Motion passed 4-0; Jael Hoffman, Alternate voted due to the absence of one or more members; Dana Jeffries and Randi Pritchard were absent.

**ITEM 5: OLANCHA-CARTGAO 4 LANE PROJECT (Action Item)** – The California Department of Transportation (Caltrans) with the support of Inyo County Local Transportation Commission has proposed widening about 12.7 miles of U.S. Highway 395 in Inyo County near the towns of Olancha and Cartago. A representative from Caltrans will provide an update for the NRAC on the project.

For more information on the project see: <http://www.dot.ca.gov/dist9/projects/olancha/>

Cedrik Zimitis, Caltrans provided an overview of the project and discussed the rationale for the chosen alternative. Mr. Zimitis provided a handout which included frequently-asked-questions and a map of the selected alternative.

Comments and questions posed by the Committee include:

- The Olancha community has concerns about pollution, noise, and visuals due to the chosen alternative.
- The community also has concerns about dust and traffic impacts from the use of Walker Creek as a connector road. Mr. Zimitis commented that design of the connector road will happen at a later time and those impacts will be evaluated in the process.
- Asked whether the existing Hwy 395 will become a County road. Mr. Zimitis indicated that the portion of Hwy 395 north of the Hwy 190 interchange will become a County road and the portion south of the Hwy 190 interchange will become Hwy 190 and connect to the re-routed Hwy 395. This is beneficial for the County because that portion of road remains in the State maintained mileage system.
- Asked about how the speed limit will be determined on the new Hwy 190 portion. Mr. Zimitis indicated that a traffic study will be done and the speed limit is based partially on the average speed that people are traveling. The traffic study done by AAA illustrates the process and will be provided to the NRAC members.
- With regards to truck traffic from the Crystal Geyser (CGR) plant, Mr. Zimitis indicated that they will be encouraging CGR to use the new alignment for accessing their plant.
- With regards to local input, Mr. Zimitis indicated that Caltrans placed local concerns higher than most other concerns, including cost, regional public concerns, and natural and physical environment.
- Doug Thompson recommended making the exit out of CGR a right-turn only and thereby forcing the trucks to use the new alignment.

**ITEM 6: RENEWABLE ENERGY GENERAL PLAN AMENDMENT (REGPA) (Action Item)** – The County is working on a Renewable Energy General Plan Amendment (REGPA). Staff will provide an overview of the project and present the background report and draft policies and ask for input from the NRAC. For more REGPA information, see: <http://www.inyoplanning.org/projects/REGPA.htm>

Cathreen Richards, Senior Planner provided a brief history of the project and presented the REGPA background report and the potential criteria that will be used in development of the Renewable Energy Development Area's (REDA's).

Comments and questions posed by the Committee include:

- Transmission upgrades take a long time (approximately 10 years).
- Show the approximate size of the proposed projects on the map so that there is an idea of the scale of these types of projects.
- Solar is not a practical power source until storage is figured out.

- Supervisors Tilleman's commented to the Civics Club that there might be a possibility of the general public being able to purchase panels at the same price that LADWP will be paying for the Solar Ranch panels.

Ms. Richards asked the NRAC to provide comments on the REGPA Criteria and Draft Policies by December 6, 2013.

**ITEM 7: FOREST PLAN UPDATE/REVISION – FOCUS PAPERS (Action Item) –**

The County is working with the Inyo National Forest (INF) on it update to the INF Plan. Focus papers for Multiple Uses and Biology will be discussed with the NRAC and input may be solicited for the Planning Commission and the Board of Supervisors. The INF Draft Assessment may be available by the meeting date.

Additional information is available at: <http://inyoplanning.org/InyoNationalForest.htm>

Josh Hart, Planning Director gave a brief summary of the Forest Plan Update and where in the plan they currently are. Mr. Hart also provided a brief summary on the Focus Papers and the purpose of them.

The Committee had the following comments and questions:

- Whether the memorandum discussed in Section 7.2 (Critique) of the Biological Focus Paper produced by North State Resources would be available for review.
- The blowdown event discussed in the Draft Assessment affected a much larger portion of the Forest than the Assessment indicates. The Whitney Portal area lost a lot of trees as well as the rest of the forest.
- Agencies need to address housing and release lands appropriate for additional housing.
- Geothermal should be addressed in multiple uses.
- Population growth in the urban areas means that there is the possibility for a big increase in trail use.
- The County needs a high-standard of tourist facilities to appease the travelers coming through the area.

Mr. Hart asked for comments on the Draft Assessment prior to December 10, 2013.

**DIRECTOR'S REPORT**

- There is a possibility in the future for a lot more Critical Habitat designations for a list of endangered, threatened, or some other special status species stemming from a lawsuit the Center for Biological Diversity filed against the U.S. Fish & Wildlife Service.
- All NRAC members are required to complete a 2-hour ethics training every two years.
- Two of the NRAC member's terms have expired and the County will begin a recruitment process soon.

**ITEM 8: SCHEDULE OF NEXT MEETING –** The Committee set a tentative meeting date of either February 13, 2014 or February 20, 2014

The meeting adjourned at 8:10 p.m.

Prepared by:  
Nolan Bobroff  
Staff to Natural Resource Advisory Committee