



Meeting Highlights: January 19, 2011 Owens Lakebed Planning Committee

Prepared by the Center for Collaborative Policy

Meeting in Brief

The Planning Committee reviewed the "Showing Progress Draft" Master Plan and provided comments on the existing conditions (sections 1-3). The Planning Committee still has to finalize the Master Plan legal framework, refine zone assignments, develop the plan implementation structure (governance), proceed with the Science Advisory Panel, and conduct another round of briefings. The goal is to have a draft plan this spring.

The Planning Committee reviewed different water use scenarios on the lakebed to better understand the implications of the Committee's planning work. Moving forward, the Planning Committee can consider this information as members work to maximize water conservation while achieving habitat and other plan goals and objectives.

During plan implementation, Planning Committee members and stakeholders envision being involved in monitoring, developing funding, assisting in interpretive plan development, and serving on an advisory group that would meet once or twice a year. Members also envision an active technical advisory committee to grapple with managing the areas designated as "habitat."

Next Meeting: March 16, 2010, 9:30-3:30, Forest Service Office in Bishop

There will be no Planning Committee meeting in February.

Web site: <https://owenslakebed.pubspsvr.com>

Action Items

Who	Due 2011	Action Item
Tammy	2/16	Investigate nomenclature for a word that could be used to describe "a wildlife viewing area that draws people to visit site, but does not denote restrictive land use"
Margot		Develop a section in the Master Plan that cite all the different regulatory agreements that impact the lakebed
Margot		Create a section that addresses water resources
CCP	2/16	Include public access as an agenda item at tribal cultural resources meeting Feb 16 (6-8) in Bishop
CCP	2/5	Schedule a governance (i.e. implementation structure) conference call

Master Plan

Planning Progress

The Planning Committee has completed drafting the vision statement, objectives, existing conditions, and initial planning zones. The Solar Work Group has completed its work and made recommendations to the Planning Committee.

Next steps include agreeing whether to pursue a Natural Community Conservation Plan (NCCP) or a Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) as the Master Plan legal framework. The Agency Forum will discuss the legal framework at its next meeting on January 24, 2011. Regardless of the framework chosen, the Planning Committee members see value in proceeding with the Science Advisory Panel. Therefore, the Center for Collaborative Policy will work with the Coordinating Committee to put the panel together, as well as schedule a date for a site visit and meeting.

Other next steps include:

- Drafting chapters in the Master Plan for monitoring and adaptive management
- Refining the planning zones
- Developing a governance structure for plan implementation
- Determining how to characterize and categorize groundwater in the plan
- Preparing for another round of constituent and organizational briefings

Public Access

Mindy Meyer, Public Access Work Group Facilitator, introduced the work done by the group, and Planning Committee member Supervisor Richard Cervantes presented the work group's recommendations.

The group's purpose is to develop recommendations for public access. Public access refers to how people enter the area, what they do once they get to the lakebed, and what can be done to enhance and contribute to the visitor experience. The Work Group looked at constraints to public access, such as cultural resources protection; public, worker, and equipment safety; and dust control, mining, and grazing operations. The group identified priorities that mirrored those constraints. One top priority was to positively change public perception of the lakebed. Given these factors, the Public Access Work Group developed a list of options that could be implemented when the conditions were appropriate.

The Work Group brainstormed a list of possible entry points. Some of the entry points below may need to be narrowed down in consideration of safety, impact on operations; and seasonal conditions.

Highway 395
 Brady Highway
 Northwest Seep
 Cottonwood Marsh
 Ash Creek
 Willow Dip
 Cartago Springs

Highway 136
 LORP East River Road
 Old State Highway (136)
 North and South
 Sulfate Road (LADWP
 Facilities)

Highway 190
 Dirty Socks Well/Dirty
 Socks Yard

The Work Group did not envision that any additional entry points would be developed; however, the group recommended entry point improvements including upgrades to roads, pullouts, signage, and kiosks.

Supervisor Cervantes shared the Work Group’s recommendations of action items that could be implemented over the next 10 years, summarized in the table below. The primary themes for activities fell under education, recreation, and economic development.

Proposed Implementation of Owens Lakebed Public Access Plan	
1-3 years	Develop Owens Lakebed Interpretive/Education Plan for phased implementation
	Design Interactive Visitor-Based Website for Owens Lakebed
	Develop Design and Plan for Interagency Visitor Center (IAVC) Owens Lakebed Wing; secure funding for implementation (Phase 2 of Interp. Plan)
	Design Owens Lakebed Scenic Loop
	Design additional interpretive projects on/around lakebed (i.e., trails, viewing platforms, boardwalks, kiosks, pullouts, etc.) and prioritize for implementation
	Develop system or guidelines for self- guided and organized tours of the lakebed
	Implement Phase 1 of the Owens Lakebed Interpretive/Education Plan
	Activate Interactive Visitor-Based Website for Owens Lakebed
	Designate Owens Lake Scenic Loop with pullouts and appropriate interpretive materials where necessary
4-6 years	Begin implementing additional interpretive projects (i.e., trails, viewing platforms, boardwalks, kiosks, pullouts, etc.) that are priority or funded if possible
	Implement Phase 2 of Owens Lakebed Interpretive/Education Plan
	Construct IAVC Owens Lakebed Wing and associated exhibits
7-10 years	Continue implementing additional interpretive projects on/around lakebed (i.e., trails, viewing platforms, boardwalks, kiosks, pullouts, etc.) as needed
	Implement Phase 3 of Owens Lakebed Interpretive/Education Plan
	Bring IAVC Owens Lakebed Wing into full operation
	Staff IAVC as needed for disseminating Owens Lakebed Information
7-10 years	Continue implementing additional interpretive projects on/around lakebed (i.e., trails, viewing platforms, boardwalks, kiosks, etc.) if needed

Planning Committee Recommendations

The Planning Committee recommended that the tribes be included in refining the Public Access Plan, limits to access be reviewed with Rio Tinto; further consideration be

given to what parts of the lakebed would be available for open access versus managed access; administrative decisions be made about funding and costs, and more formal approval be sought for partnership with the Interagency Visitor Center. Furthermore, a trail should be planned on the lakebed as part of this public access plan. Creating a plan for a trail on the lakebed was a requirement in a recent lease agreement between State Lands Commission and the Department of Water and Power.

Water Analysis of Proposed Zones/Water Use Scenarios

[\(Click this link to presentation\)](#)

Consultant John Dickey made the presentation on water use scenarios. The purpose of this presentation was to quantify the water demand associated with future dust control and for various planning scenarios under consideration in the Master Plan. Moving forward, the Planning Committee can use this information to maximize water conservation while achieving habitat and other Master Plan goals and objectives.

Currently the three best available control measures (BACM -- dust control methods approved by the Great Basin Air Pollution Control District) are: 1) shallow flooding, which requires the most amount of water; 2) gravel, which, requires no water (but it is not suitable for certain areas on the lakebed), and 3) managed vegetation, which requires water, but less than shallow flooding. Approving a dust control measure as BACM takes about five years.

Every year the Great Basin Air Pollution Control District reviews the lakebed to identify if additional dust source areas require control. Additional dust control areas usually equate to increased water demand since BACM, except for gravel, require water. The current aqueduct has the capacity to transport 95,000 square acre feet of water to the lakebed.

In the different scenarios, various designs using vegetation, shallow flood, and habitat designation were analyzed, both by today's current conditions about 42 square miles of dust control and under a possible future scenario that about 75 square miles of the playa would need to be mitigated for dust control.

The Master Plan will propose that more water efficient dust control measures move forward for testing. The habitat work group will also think creatively about how to create habitat for different species in water efficient ways. All of these planning efforts will contribute to the multiple objectives of the Master Plan.

Implementation

Planning Committee members and stakeholders shared how they envisioned participating in the plan implementation. Members expressed a strong interest in being involved in a variety of ways during plan implementation: monitoring and adaptive management, developing the interpretative plan, soliciting funding for Master Plan activities, tribal government-to-government consultation, and participating in a formal advisory group that could meet once or twice a year. Some members also expressed interest in participating in a technical advisory committee that would guide management of the wildlife area or areas designated as "habitat." (The Planning Committee has yet to title this area.)

"Showing Progress Draft" Master Plan Feedback

Planning Committee members were pleased overall with the progress of the draft. Feedback concentrated on sections 1-3, existing conditions. Specific recommendations are:

- Provide a section that includes all of the different regulatory agreements that impact Owens Lakebed (including Long Term Water Agreement).
- Provide a section that addresses water resources
- Change language in the vision statement to remove the word preserve. The Planning Committee members agree on improving habitat values; however, the word preserve could communicate that the area was restricted from uses other than habitat. Tammy Branston from the California Department of Fish and Game will review possible names that accomplish the aims of drawing people to the site for habitat viewing while also conveying the area is designated for multiple uses (Section 2.4).
- Limit public trust values to the State Lands Commission set definition: aesthetics, public access, and habitat. Other resources, such as cultural resources and renewable are not yet defined as public trust by State Lands. The Planning Committee agreed to not include renewable energy as a public trust value, but to keep working towards having it declared a public trust value by other means. One option suggested was that the existing list of resources remain and that a separate section provide the State Lands Commission definition. That way, the Master Plan resources are closely linked.
- In Section 1.1 p. 1-2, there is a reference which states, "The dust control measures must also be approved by the Commission." Procedurally, it is the California State Lands Commission (Commission) that approves projects, while the Great Basin Air Pollution Control District (District) approves measures. In other words, the only body that can determine whether a dust mitigation measure is deemed appropriate to actually control the dust effectively on Owens Lakebed is the District. As landowner, the Commission has to agree to allow that method to be used on the lakebed, which the Commission determines based on public trust values. Therefore the sentence needs to be changed accordingly.
- A finance subcommittee should be developed whose members have expertise in fund development.
- Develop a critical path that shows where we are today and where we want to be in six months, twelve months, ten years, etc. (show landmarks we want to achieve at certain points in time.)
- Create a timeline for the action plan that could be utilized for annual reviews.

Updates

The **Habitat Work Group** has drafted the Habitat Suitability Index (HSI) to estimate the ability of a given area to support selected species or groups of species. Presently, the group is working to find a current baseline condition for the lakebed. They are also working to picture rankings on the lake with core good habitat areas. The aim is to consider improvement and enhancement of habitat values that moves beyond notions of acreage and boundaries. Additionally, the work group is figuring out what provisions need to be put in place in order to assure habitat needs are maintained into the future. They hope to complete this work at their next meeting.

EIR Consultants: The EIR consultant contract is underway and is currently scheduled for approval at the next LADWP Board meeting in early February.

Phase 7A Dust Control: LADWP and the District, in consultation with the State Lands Commission, are in the process of identifying what mitigation should occur in the area known as Phase 7A (formerly moat and row and a few other cells). These areas cannot wait for the Master Plan as they must be addressed now. LADWP is trying to use what they have learned through the Master Plan process as they proceed. They know that gravel will not work in all areas in 7A, they will put water in the areas that need it and they are approaching the transitions areas in new ways. They have hired a landscape architect. They are investigating whether the use of the three approved BACMs would meet District approval if used in combination with one another. LADWP hopes to use the HSI to plan for the habitat that would be most appropriate in this cell and utilize this to determine water needs for those areas. This is an opportunity to jumpstart the ideas from the Master Plan by employing them on the ground and learning from them prior to plan implementation. The timeline for the EIR and comment period is still being negotiated, but is expected that it will be fast, perhaps by the end of the year.

February Planning Committee Deferred to March 16: The February Planning Committee meeting has been cancelled to allow more time to complete vital tasks in various work groups and committees which are instrumental in developing the next draft of the Master Plan. The next meeting will be March 16 in Bishop at the Forest Service office.

Inyo County Solar and Wind Amendment: The public comment period for the Mitigated Negative Declaration/Initial Study for the General Plan Amendment on Solar and Wind Renewable Energy has been extended to February 14, 2011.

The Planning Commission hearing for the proposed General Plan Amendment is now tentatively scheduled for Wednesday, **February 23, 2011, at 10:00 a.m.** in the Board of Supervisors Room, County Administrative Center, 224 North Edwards Street, Independence, California 93526.

Calendar

Feb. 16, 9:30-5:00, Habitat Work Group at LADWP Office in Bishop

Feb. 16, 6:00-8:00 p.m., Tribal Cultural Resources Meeting in Bishop

Feb. 23, 1:00-4:00, Agency Forum in Sacramento

March 16, 9:30-3:30, Planning Committee Meeting at Forest Service in Bishop

Topics

- Implementation
- Zones
- Briefings
- EIR

March 23, 1:00-4:00, Agency Forum in Sacramento

Future Planning Committee Meetings

Planning Committee members may wish to hold these dates until its work plan and the EIR process is identified for the year. The Planning Committee will NOT meet all these dates.

Third Wednesdays in 2011

March 16
April 20
May 18
June 22
July 20
August 17
Sept 21
Oct 19
Nov 16
Dec 21