



Briefing Statement

Date: March 28, 2012

Title: Amargosa Basin Coordination

Issue: Reauthorization of the MOU for *Managing Natural Resources in the Amargosa River Basin and Adjacent Areas*.

Background/Discussion

- The Amargosa Basin supports seventeen listed species and at least twenty-eight endemic species. Most of these species are wholly dependent on groundwater fed aquatic and riparian systems. The Amargosa Basin also contains Ash Meadows National Wildlife Refuge, the Devil's Hole Unit of Death Valley National Park, Amargosa River Area of Critical Environmental Concern (ACEC), Amargosa Wild and Scenic River (AWSR), Ash Meadows ACEC, Amargosa Mesquite ACEC, Old Spanish National Historic Trail, and designated wilderness. BLM, FWS, and NPS are concerned about the impacts regional population growth, land and ground water development, and recreational use will have on these ecosystems. A coordinated, comprehensive science program is needed to determine the effects these impacts will have on the natural resources managed by the Bureaus within the region.
- In October 2003, regional executives from BLM CA, BLM NV, FWS, NPS, and USGS met to discuss the Amargosa's resources and the coordination of management issues within the region to protect those sensitive resources.
- A result of the October 2003 meeting was development of the 2004 MOU for *Managing Natural Resources in the Amargosa River Basin and Adjacent Areas* (attached). The MOU established that inter-bureau coordination and cooperation would occur to facilitate conservation planning, development of management actions that use an ecosystem perspective, and to adopt policies tailored to protect federally administered resources within the Amargosa Basin. This MOU expired in 2009.
- Recent example results of the coordination through the MOU include:
 - Development of the USGS Southern Amargosa Embedded Model (SAMM).
 - Development of a regional ground water monitoring network to replace the former Yucca Mountain Monitoring Network.
 - Development of the BLM, USGS, TNC Lower Amargosa Water Study to collect data that can be used for eventual finer resolution modeling for the AWSR.
 - Coordinated DOI Bureau responses to environmental documents, development proposals, and the Nevada State Engineer.
 - Development of a shallow ground water monitoring network in designated critical habitat for endangered plants.
- A revised draft MOU is attached.

Contact

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DRAFT
MEMORANDUM OF UNDERSTANDING
BETWEEN
BUREAU OF LAND MANAGEMENT, FISH AND WILDLIFE SERVICE,
NATIONAL PARK SERVICE, AND U.S. GEOLOGICAL SURVEY
FOR MANAGING NATURAL RESOURCES IN THE AMARGOSA RIVER
BASIN AND ADJACENT AREAS, CALIFORNIA AND NEVADA

I. BACKGROUND AND PURPOSE:

This MEMORANDUM OF UNDERSTANDING (MOU) is between the following United States Department of Interior Bureaus: Bureau of Land Management (hereinafter referred to as BLM), Fish and Wildlife Service (hereinafter referred to as FWS), National Park Service (hereinafter referred to as NPS), and United States Geological Survey (hereinafter referred to as USGS).

BLM, FWS, NPS, and USGS have responsibilities for managing natural resources in the Amargosa River Basin and adjacent areas within the Death Valley Regional Ground Water Flow System (hereafter referred to as the Area of Concern) of California and Nevada. BLM administers large tracts of public land within this area. FWS manages the Ash Meadows National Wildlife Refuge and protects a number of plant and animal species endemic to the area. NPS provides stewardship over Death Valley National Park, including the Devils Hole detached unit. USGS conducts research and collects data to provide scientific information used by the other bureaus to make informed resource-management decisions.

Ground-water discharge at a number of localized areas within the Area of Concern sustains unique phreatophytic, riparian, and aquatic ecosystems. Although relatively small in areal extent, these ecosystems are the only habitats within the surrounding arid desert region for endemic plants and animals, many of which have been listed as endangered, threatened, or sensitive species. These ecosystems also provide recreational opportunities for residents and visitors to the region. ~~Several reaches~~ Approximately twenty-five miles of the Amargosa River ~~are eligible for inclusion within~~ compose the recently designated Amargosa River National Wild and Scenic River (AWSR) System. Nine BLM and NPS wilderness units are within the Area of Concern. The ~~newly designated~~ Old Spanish Trail National Historic Trail also traverses the region. BLM, FWS, and NPS are concerned about the impacts regional population growth, land and ground water development, and recreational use will have on these ecosystems. A coordinated, comprehensive science program is needed to determine the effects these impacts will have on the natural resources managed by the Bureaus within the Area of Concern.

The purpose of this MOU is to improve coordination, cooperation, and communication between bureaus on efforts to conserve and manage water resources and water-dependent resources within the Area of Concern.

Interagency cooperation will enhance natural-resource management and planning efforts by addressing issues on a consistent regional scale and increasing the efficiency in which Bureaus utilize resources. The overall goal is to protect the health and vigor of sensitive local ecosystems while allowing for sustainable economic development of desert communities and recreational access to these areas.

II. GEOGRAPHIC SCOPE

The geographic scope of this MOU corresponds to an area of the Death Valley Regional Ground-Water Flow System generally bounded on the west by Death Valley National Park, on the east by the Spring Mountains and Nevada Test Site, on the north by Sarcobatus Flat and Oasis Valley, and on the south by Interstate 15.

III. MANAGEMENT OBJECTIVES:

Signatory agencies to this MOU want to achieve greater cooperation and coordination on natural-resource issues within the Area of Concern. It is envisioned that the agencies can work with each other and external agencies, organizations, entities, and stakeholders to manage natural resources using a proactive regional approach. The overall goal is to protect the health and vigor of sensitive local ecosystems while allowing for sustainable economic development of desert communities.

IV. AUTHORITIES AND MANAGEMENT TOOLS:

Applicable Authorities

- Federal Land Policy and Management Act of 1976
- Endangered Species Act of 1973 and subsequent amendments
- National Park Service Organic Act (39 Stat. 535, 16 U.S.C. 1)
- Proclamation of January 17, 1952 (Proc 2961, 66 Stat. C. 18, 17 Fed. Reg. 691) making Devils Hole a detached component of Death Valley National Monument
- California Desert Protection Act of 1994
- National Wildlife Refuge System Administrative Act of 1966
- National Wildlife Refuge System Improvement Act of 1997
- Wild and Scenic Rivers Act of 1968, as amended

Applicable Bureau Plans

- California Desert Conservation Area Plan of 1980, as amended
- Amargosa Vole Recovery Plan of 1990
- Recovery Plan of 1990 for Endangered and Threatened Species in Ash Meadows
- Southwestern Willow Flycatcher Recovery Plan of 2002

- Bureau of Land Management Las Vegas Resource Management Plan of 1998
- Southern Nevada Mesquite Woodland Habitat Management Plan
- Death Valley National Park General Management Plan of 2002

Future management plans for other areas will be incorporated as each is approved and implemented.

V. INTER-BUREAU COORDINATION AND COOPERATION:

Each bureau will make efforts to:

- Facilitate conservation planning and management actions using an ecosystem perspective and adopt policies tailored to protect federally administered resources within the Area of Concern.
- Develop consistent protocols and methods for scientific research and resource monitoring.
- Share scientific information and data and adopt standardized models and analytical methods.
- Identify and develop proposals and work plans for joint projects.
- Share resources, to the extent possible and practical, to implement projects and work plans developed under this MOU.
- Cooperate in developing budget requests and pursuing funding opportunities to implement projects and work plans developed under this MOU.
- Participate on a standing management oversight committee, which will meet at least once annually to coordinate activities and facilitate actions prescribed under this MOU.
- Conduct periodic meetings among staff specialists, as necessary, to coordinate actions on regional water-resources issues and facilitate actions prescribed under this MOU.

VI. EXTERNAL COORDINATION AND COOPERATION:

Natural-resource management, conservation planning, and related scientific research conducted with an ecosystem perspective requires significant coordination and cooperation with other agencies, entities, and stakeholders having interests within the Area of Concern and adjacent areas within the Death Valley Regional Ground-Water Flow System. Signatory bureaus will work with these external groups to identify solutions that allow sustainable economic development to coexist with the protection of sensitive ecosystems. Signatory bureaus also will work to develop unified positions on issues of concern to facilitate consistent negotiations with external groups.

VII. PRINCIPAL CONTACTS:

Bureau of Land Management
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~~Mark T. Morse~~Mary Jo Rugwell
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National Park Service
Death Valley National Park
~~J.T. Reynolds~~Sarah Craighead
Park Superintendent
P.O. Box 579
Death Valley, CA 92328
Ph: (760)786-3240

VIII. FUNDING

Bureaus shall use their best efforts to secure funding to implement projects approved under this MOU. Project funding and implementation will be described under separate project-specific agreements between bureaus. Performance under this MOU depends upon the lawful appropriation, authorization, and allocation of funds. All bureaus agree to develop efficient means for transferring funds among said parties to implement projects conducted under this MOU.

IX. AGREEMENT PERIOD:

This MOU is effective as of the last date of signature by the agency representatives listed under Section XII. This MOU will be in effect for a period of five years from the

execution date. The agreement period may be extended by mutual consent of all participating bureaus by attaching a written amendment to this document.

X. TERMINATION:

Any bureau may terminate its participation in this MOU by issuing a written notice to the other agencies not less than thirty (30) days prior to the effective date of termination.

XI. MODIFICATIONS:

The terms of this MOU may be modified upon mutual consent of all bureaus by attaching a written amendment to this document.

XII. SIGNATORIES:

~~Robert V. Abbey~~Amy Lueders
Bureau of Land Management
Nevada State Director

Date

~~Michael Pool~~James Kenna
Bureau of Land Management
California State Director

Date

~~Steve Thompson~~Ren Lohofener
United States Fish and Wildlife Service
~~Nevada/California Operations Manager~~Pacific Southwest Regional Director

Date

~~Jonathan Jarvis~~Chris Lehnertz
National Park Service
Pacific West Regional Director

Date

~~A. Wes Ward~~Mark Sogge
United States Geological Survey
~~Western Regional Geologist~~Acting Pacific Southwest Area Executive

Date

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AMONG THE
BUREAU OF LAND MANAGEMENT, FISH AND WILDLIFE SERVICE,
NATIONAL PARK SERVICE, AND GEOLOGICAL SURVEY
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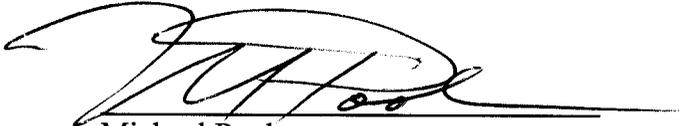
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XII. SIGNATORIES:



Robert V. Abbey
Bureau of Land Management
Nevada State Director

2.2.04
Date



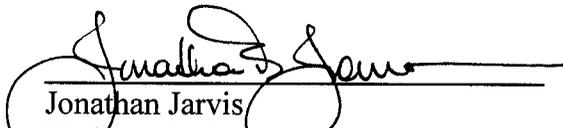
Michael Pool
Bureau of Land Management
California State Director

12/19/03
Date



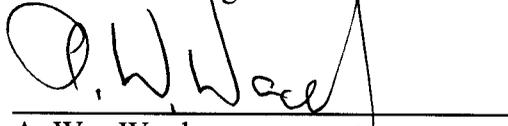
Steve Thompson
United States Fish and Wildlife Service
Nevada/California Operations Manager

1/14 / 2004
Date



Jonathan Jarvis
National Park Service
Pacific West Regional Director

1/20/2004
Date



A. Wes Ward
United States Geological Survey
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23 Jan 04
Date