

BOARD OF SUPERVISORS
COUNTY OF KERN

October 19, 2004

Mr. John Hamill, DOI Coordinator
Desert Managers Group
222 East Main Street, Suite 215
Barstow, CA 92311

Dear Mr. Hamill:

The Kern County Board of Supervisors is requesting an active role in participation and input at the quarterly meetings of the Desert Managers Group (DMG). We believe that your members should consider local government as a partner with your organization, rather than in the context of either an interest-group stakeholder, or as an adversary.

The DMG was organized following passage of the California Desert Protection Act (CDPA) to facilitate communication among the federal and State agencies with desert land management responsibilities, including Department of Defense installations. This was an appropriate response to CDPA's sweeping changes in land use policy and the expanding administrative responsibilities of some agencies under the Act. For several years, many people were unaware of your organization. In recent years, however, DMG has become more visible, providing a central clearinghouse for many issues and much information regarding natural resource management and public lands in the desert region.

Kern County and others now attend and participate in DMG through our regional organization, QuadState County Government Coalition. Gerald Hillier, executive director of the Coalition, has kept us informed of the issues and actions that the DMG has addressed. He has also offered input to the DMG on issues appropriate to our interests. However, after first encouraging public attendance and participation, the DMG has recently restricted stakeholder participation. While we understand the need for managing public participation, we feel that the guidelines imposed in your June 16 directive, and affirmed in your August 9 letter, should not apply to local government.

Counties in the region undertake a variety of government activities that directly affect DMG member agencies: solid waste management, road maintenance, signing, representation of constituent and land interests, and planning and land use authorizations on private lands intermingled with Federal lands. Counties also provide liaison through their membership in a variety of State and regional

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organizations not otherwise represented in the DMG such as Air Quality Districts and Water Quality Districts. County Supervisors, while lacking the direct land management responsibility of many of your members, do have accountability to an electorate, and do have a strong regulatory role in the desert region.

We propose that the Desert Managers Group consider appointing one or more local government representatives to the active Board. This will assure local government's full participation in DMG so that our input may be blended with that of your Federal and State representatives.

If the prospect of having up to six local government representatives seems unwieldy, perhaps the DMG might consider appointing one or two county representatives with extended terms, as the BLM's District Advisory Council does. Alternatively, DMG might name the QuadState Coalition's director to represent local government while encouraging County Supervisors to sit in as co-members when meetings are in their jurisdictions or when issues of local importance are on the agenda.

I encourage you to review local participation in the DMG and consider county government as a partner in your process, since our interests mesh with those of your member land management and resource agencies. We look forward to hearing from you regarding the thoughts of your group relating to membership and participation.

Sincerely,



JON MCQUISTON, Chairman
Kern County Board of Supervisors

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cc: Mike Pool, State Director, U.S. Bureau of Land Management
Steve Thompson, California/Nevada Operations Manager, U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service
Jon Jarvis, Regional Director, National Park Service
Linda Hansen, District Manager, California Desert Conservation Area
Senator Dianne Feinstein
Senator Barbara Boxer
Congressman Bill Thomas
Congressman Howard McKeon
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Craig Pope, Roads Commissioner