

ALAA Newsletter
Jay Valle, Editor
1421 Latchford Avenue
Hacienda Heights, CA 91745

FIRST CLASS MAIL



**AMERICAN LANDS ACCESS
ASSOCIATION, INC.**

Protecting the Public Lands for the Public

<http://www.amlands.org/>

January February March 2013



AMERICAN LANDS ACCESS ASSOCIATION

NEW MEMBERSHIP and ANNUAL RENEWAL FORM

PLEASE PRINT ALL INFORMATION

(Must be postmarked or received by December 31 each year)

Member/Contact Name: _____
Last First

Last First

Organization Name _____

Address: _____
Street City State Zip

Mailing Address: _____
(If different than above)

Phone Number: _____
Primary Residence Primary Business (if any)

Email Address _____
Name Address

Name Address

Member Signature _____ **Date:** _____

**Send Completed form with renewal Dues to: Dues are: \$25.00 for individual/couple
\$50.00 for a club or society**

New Member _____ **(X) Renewal** _____ **(X) Amount Enclosed \$** _____

American Lands Access Association
C/O Membership Chairman
P.O. BOX 224

SANTA CLARA, CA 95052

Make Checks payable to: American Lands Access Association (ALAA)

A grassroots 501-C-4 Educational, non-profit organization dedicated to keeping public lands open for the public



American Lands Access Association, Inc.

Protecting the Public Lands for the Public
January February March 2013

President's Message

ALAA CLEAN-UP AT QUARTZSITE A Picture is Worth a Thousand Words Shirley Leeson, ALAA President

The 1st Annual ALAA Quartzsite Clean-up went off without a hitch on Sunday, January 27, 2013. Working closely with the Yuma BLM office this event took some planning. Working with John MacDonald, Field Manager and Bill Alexander, Park Ranger, the location was planned and the clean-up executed.

What ALAA got out of it was tremendous publicity and recognition. The BLM in both Arizona and California put the successful event with the above picture on their facebook page.

This event was so special on so many levels....

The ROCKHOUND IMAGE!

What our group accomplished in a short period of time. Think what we could have done with twice the size of those who turned out. Think what we can accomplish in the future. A new movement by rockhounds. There will be a 2nd Annual Quartzsite Clean-up in January 2014, won't you be part of it?

The reasoning for this event was simple, over the past few years, in going to BLM meetings, it was evident that rockhounds had been deemphasized as far as BLM was concerned. Attending meetings found BLM employees noting, "this is the first time we've seen rockhounds attend meetings, we thought rockhounds were a dying group."

What to do, fight back. Let everyone know we are a viable group by doing something positive. Make ALAA (rockhounds) known to government employees by helping them with a clean-up.

- A picture is worth a thousand words....
- OUR IMAGE - Giving back, cleaning up the environment. Show everyone that we care about our public lands.
- Creating a movement, ALAA will lead the way. I have already been in contact with several BLM Field Offices regarding official clean-ups.
- Encourage ALL rockhounds to do clean-ups in their areas as part of their field trips. This doesn't mean they haven't always, but make it "official" with assistance by BLM/Forestry



HELP THE ENVIRONMENT, recycle your ALAA Newsletter by passing it along to another rockhound or rock club.

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For current information and alerts go to the ALAA Web Page at <http://www.amlands.org/>. You can also download a copy of the current newsletter or peruse the archive of previous editions.

President's Message

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I am asking each and everyone who reads this to go back to your club and propose a clean-up on public lands, be it BLM, or Forestry. Tight budgets by government entities makes it an attractive project for either BLM or Forestry to participate in.

Blueprint for a successful Clean-up:

Contact the office that oversees the proposed campsite field trip.

Propose a day and time so the office has it on their calendar

Have the office pick an area of their choice to clean-up (rockhounds clean-up their campsite, so this would not be a consideration) But an off-ramp or access to a public campground might be a target.

On the day of the event, someone from the office will be there to sign you all in, to give you an overview of what to pick up and what to watch for: snakes, bees, etc. They will have trash bags. And they will haul everything away in the end.

What you need to bring: hat, sensible shoes, long sleeve shirts, long pants, GLOVES, equipment: garden and lawn rakes, broom sticks with a nail in the end, plastic "grabbers" and WATER.

And ALAA red/orange trash bags,(contact me and I'll send you some) and a CAMERA. You don't need many trash bags but arrange them at the front of the trash heap. Pictures of the group and pictures of the trash heap. If the BLM doesn't bring a camera, offer them pictures of the event.

Once you are home, write an article for your club and your regional federation. Put them up on your website and facebook page.

With your help, ALAA will lead the way..... contact me, I want to know your thoughts and ideas.

Your president, Shirley Leeson
president@amlands.org



Pictured: Lauren & Shirleen Williams, Idaho Falls, ID; Marion & Vivian Roberts, Modesto, CA; Steve Kissner, South Dakota; Tom & Brenda Burchard, Ogden, UT; John & Susy Martin, Lancaster, CA; Marty & Linda Daugherty, Long Beach, CA; Ted & Paula Magee, Modesto, CA; Kim & Jay Erb, Anaheim, CA; Ralph & Penny Luther, Hamilton, MT; Dennis Huggins, Taft, CA; Dee Holland & Shirley Leeson, La Mesa, CA; and the only Ye Old Timer – Peggy Morrison, Carson City, NV.

Shirley was leader and John Martin was the photographer.

CORVA Land Use Resources and Public Policy Report By Bruce Whitcher, CORVA VP of Land Resources and Public Policy

House Resources Committee
 The House Resources Committee has organized for the 113th Congress and among the significant changes made was the creation of a new subcommittee, the Subcommittee on Public Lands and Environmental Regulation. The Chairman of the new Subcommittee is Rep. Rob Bishop (R-UT) and he has already announced an aggressive agenda including a thorough review of the National Environmental Policy Act, known to

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GO IMMEDIATELY TO OUR WEBSITE: www.amlands.org and click on any item on the left hand side. NOW!

How NEPA Works (the very short version)

By Joanne Spivack
New Mexico Access Activist

Over the years ALAA and others have asked their members to “contact your Congressman” or “write comments” for various subjects. Some time ago someone came forward and said, “if you don’t give me a sample I can copy or modify, I’m probably not going to do it because I don’t want to appear stupid.

We have told you that Congress has mandated both the U.S. Forest Service and BLM to produce a travel management plan for each parcel of public land. We asked you to sit through boring meetings and try to make sense of what is being said by government employees... Below is a short primer on what to look for and how to make sense of these meetings and comment periods that follow.

Shirley Leeson, President, ALAA

How NEPA Works (the very short version)

The national forests are not allowed to just close roads and trails by claiming it’s because of the Travel Management Rule. They still have to follow NEPA regulations, which require that closure decisions must be based on a rational and complete analysis which is fully disclosed to the public. That analysis is presented in an Environmental Impact Statement (EIS) or the shorter version, the Environmental Assessment (EA). They can’t just do this ‘any old way they please’. The details of how the EIS or EA must be done are in the Code of Federal Regulations, and these have the force of law. When someone sues the BLM or Forest Service, they are usually claiming the agency violated one or more of these regulations, which means they are breaking the law. Remember, any sort of lawsuit must be based on a claim that a law has been broken.

Knowledge is Power: When you understand how these pieces fit together, you’ll have the tools to make the Forest Service and BLM follow their own rules and federal laws. You will NEVER hear the Forest Service or BLM explain any of this in a public meeting. When the public doesn’t understand how to fight back, the agencies are free to break the laws and do whatever they want. Unfortunately, the buck stops on our desk: NEPA puts the burden of watchdog on the public. There is no internal governmental review or congressional oversight that prevents the agencies from breaking these laws. If we don’t make them behave, no one else will. You will find that most local FS and BLM staff do not understand the rules and laws that govern what they do.

Why the No Action Alternative is the Heart of the EIS/EA: The regulations say the EIS or EA analysis must be done by comparing various options (called ‘alternatives’) to the current state of things (called the No Action Alternative in an EIS, or ‘Existing Condition’ in some EA’s). The cornerstone of the analysis is the No Action Alternative, because by law it must be used as the basis for comparisons. The EIS or EA must disclose the magnitude and effects of what the FS is proposing to change, and that must be done by comparing the options (alternatives) to the baseline (No Action Alternative, or Existing Condition).

SIDEBAR: The CFR Both the FS and BLM must follow the Code of Federal Regulations. They do the details of the process a bit differently, but the basics are the same. The Code of Federal Regulations (CFR) applies to both of them. The Travel Management Rule (TMR) is only in the National Forests, it’s a USFS rule. It is NOT a law. The TMR is subservient to the CFR. The CFR is divided in chapters called ‘Titles’. The part of the CFR that applies to NEPA, it is Title 40, Part 1500. The BLM and FS also each have their own sections in the CFR that address NEPA regulations. Title 36 covers Parks and the USFS.

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How NEPA Works

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Title 43 covers the D.O.I. and BLM. The 'ecfr' (electronic CFR) is at:

<http://www.ecfr.gov/cgi-bin/ECFR?SID=c17fb90a7b80fcd7453cb039537f8b56&page=browse>

The easiest way for the FS (or BLM) to hide the extent of road closures, is by showing a deceptive 'Existing Condition' or 'No Action Alternative' in the EIS or EA. We have read dozens of travel management EISs and EAs, and this is by far the most common tactic used to deceive the public. In a nutshell, here is how it works: Let's say your forest has 2,000 miles of roads and trails. The Forest Service will say the No Action Alternative, or Existing Condition, is 1,000 miles. Then they write 3 or more alternatives. Just to frame an example, let's say one alternative leaves 600 miles open, another leaves 800 miles open, and the last leaves only 400 miles open. The Forest Service will claim that leaving 600 miles open means 60% remains open, but that's because they are counting only 600 miles out of 1,000 miles. (And so forth, 400 miles open will be claimed as 40% open). You know that they are leaving only 600 miles open out of 2,000 miles. That means that they are closing 70%, not 40% as they claim. They are not telling the truth. (These EIS's and EA's usually have maps that only show what is being left open, not what is being closed. On a 1.5 million acre forest or BLM field office, it is difficult to compare these to real maps, to see what is being closed.)

In our example, the 1,000 miles they 'swept under the rug' are ALL CLOSED BY DEFAULT. Here's how that works. The NEPA regulations say that only the roads and trails that were included in the EIS or EA can be designated. The Travel Management Rule says any road or trail not designated is closed by default. See where this goes? The easiest way to deceive the public and close huge amounts of road and trail and to HIDE THAT, is

to keep those miles OUT of the EIS or EA. This is how the NEPA regulations 'interact' with the Travel Management Rule. Those 1,000 miles of roads and trails excluded from the No Action Alternative won't be in any of the other alternatives either. Those 1,000 miles don't appear anyplace in the EIS/EA. Result: they can't be designated (NEPA) and will be closed by default (Travel Management Rule). Do you think the Forest Service didn't intentionally write the Travel Management Rule to accomplish this? You need to consider if you are being tragically naïve. The USFS top managers in Washington are not idiots.

First Place to Look For Fraud, the No Action Alternative and Existing Condition: These will be in the first two chapters. Easy to find these, use the word-search function in the PDF file of the EIS or EA. We have yet to see one with an honest No Action Alternative. When we challenge this with comments or appeals, the Forest Service throws back a blast of 'smoke and mirrors' about how they are allowed to choose what can be in the No Action Alternative. Once your appeal is rejected, the only way to fight this is to take them to court. We firmly believe they cannot manipulate NEPA regulations, but only a judge can decide that.

Deception in Action: The two largest forests in NM, the Santa Fe and the massive Gila (3.3 million acres) both used the same false No Action Alternative. Their EIS's both say 'we chose to define the No Action Alternative as our best estimate of where people drive now.' Huh? This is like claiming a golf course has only 5 holes if only 5 holes are being played at 7 am on a Monday. The No Action Alternative and 'Existing Condition' are the sum total of roads and trails, NOT the agency's 'guess' about which ones get the most use.

Here's how this deception translates into legal points:

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How NEPA Works

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- **First law-breaking:** they made an illegal pre-NEPA decision to keep existing legal, SYSTEM roads out of the No Action Alternative. They are not allowed to make undisclosed decisions outside of the EIS/EA. If they chose only some roads and trails to be included, that obviously required some decision process for what to keep in and leave out.
- **Second law-breaking:** they do not present the true Existing Condition, as required.
- **Third law-breaking:** corrupt analysis. All the comparisons and conclusions in the EIS are false, because they are based on rigged numbers. (false analysis)
- **Fourth law-breaking:** hiding the true extent of closures from the public. (failure to disclose)
- **Fifth law-breaking:** Failure to analyze the true impact that the closures will have on the public and on the local economy (yes, those are required parts of the analysis. If they hide 30% of the closures, they have under-stated by 30% how much recreation is being lost.)

How bad was it? The Santa Fe excluded 23% of their OWN system roads, and the Gila excluded 27% of their own roads. I'm not talking about the so-called 'unauthorized' or user-created roads. I mean their OWN roads that are in their INFRA database and transportation atlases. And then they cut down from there in the alternatives.

Result: everywhere in their EIS's where the Santa Fe and Gila are comparing the alternatives, it's a lie. For example, they'll say an alternative leaves 60% of the roads open. But it is not really a 40% closure, it's more like a 65% closure that leaves only 35% open, because the No Action Alternative is false, and rigged to be artificially low.

The even deeper deception: The Santa Fe claimed that 15% of the roads are not being used,

and excluded 15% of all the system roads based on that. But in our digging in the project record, we found that the '15%' figure was based on one field survey of only 18 segments of ML-1 roads (roads that are closed to the public, for administrative use only). In that field survey, the roads engineer explicitly says that 15% is only a statistical calculation, and warns against using this figure across the forest. And what do they do? Exactly what the engineer said NOT to do. This ploy was used to eliminate over a thousand miles of roads. Which ones did they take out? Easy to see when you look at the maps. They closed roads near wilderness, roads near and in Inventoried roadless areas, roads that were the only route across large areas, and roads that were critical for connectivity. Not only did they close over 70% of the forest system roads, they closed them methodically to butcher the network. Instead of loops, we have lots of unconnected dead ends off a few main routes. Do you think that was a coincidence? They have deliberately made travel in the forest difficult and inconvenient. They have also created large blocks of land with no motorized use allowed.

The Larger Plan: The massive road closures against motorized use in the Santa Fe National Forest are creating large areas where there is no motorized use. This is setting the stage for future expansions of wilderness designations and roadless areas. Travel Management closures are just Step 1 of an even bigger lock out. The Santa Fe NF started a 'reforestation' planning project last year. This object of this project is allegedly to improve forest health. It includes obliterating (destroying) roads. In other words, they are so anti-access that they immediately started pursuing road obliteration, before the Travel Management decision was even made! When we called "Foul" on them for this, they scrambled to backtrack and change the wording. But make no mistake, the long term plan is to remove roads from the land in order to inhibit and reduce where and how the public can access the forest lands.

CORVA Land Use Resources and Public Policy Report

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all as NEPA, and the Antiquities Act, which is the measure that provides the President with the authority to create national monuments. Both measures are long overdue for a comprehensive review. NEPA was enacted back in 1969 and the Antiquities Act in 1906.

Rep. Bishop wants the Subcommittee to do some serious fact finding on the cost associated with NEPA compliance both in terms of monetary cost as well as jobs lost due to administrative delays associated with administering the Act. No one should assume that Congress will revoke NEPA, but there is plenty of room to improve it. The Subcommittee does not have an easy task ahead of it because of the political volatility associated with this issue. Nonetheless, this review is desperately needed.

In terms of the Antiquities Act, the original Act is quite specific that any monuments created should have as small of a footprint as possible. Presidents of both political parties have ignored this restriction. Rep. Bishop will be looking for ways to tighten this footprint restriction while at the same time ensuring that multiple use practices, among those being recreation, are not severely limited when a new national monument is created.

National Monument Areas

Two bills were just introduced in the House of Representatives, H.R. 250 and H.R. 382 and one in the Senate, S. 104, which would place some restrictions on monument designations. While it may be hard for any of these bills to gain traction in the short term, the introduction of these measures does highlight the need to revise the Antiquities Act.

National Forests to Begin Revising their Forest Plans Based on New Forest Planning Rule

California's Inyo, Sequoia, and Sierra National Forests will begin to revise their Forest Plans ac-

ording to the new Planning Rule. "These forests will demonstrate straight out of the gate what we've been talking about in terms of collaboration," said U.S. Forest Service Chief Tom Tidwell. "People will see that under a new rule, public engagement increases and process decreases, all while providing stronger protections for our lands and water."

The preferred alternative is grounded in science and public input, and seeks to deliver stronger protections for forests, water, and wildlife while supporting the economic vitality of our rural communities. It requires providing opportunities for public involvement and collaboration throughout all stages of the planning process, as well as opportunities for Tribal consultation and coordination with state and local governments and other federal agencies.

These national forests were selected because of their urgent need for plan revisions, the importance of the benefits they provide, and the strong collaborative networks already in place. They will emphasize strong science, collaboration, strengthened protections for land, wildlife and water, and opportunities for sustainable recreation and other multiple uses that support jobs and economic vitality as they begin the process to revise their plans.

"There are 14 million acres of national forest at risk of fire in California, so this new approach to forest planning is vital," said Senator Dianne Feinstein (D-California). "I am encouraged that a new planning rule will build on existing efforts like the one in the Sierra National Forest that bring together scientists, timber harvesters and environmental groups to reduce hazardous fuels. We need more of that type of cooperation to reduce fire risks and prevent harm to people and property."

Excerpts from CORVA Newsletter, March 2013.

Permission to reprint: Jim Woods, President

Please go to CORVA website for additional information.

<http://www.corva.org/>

This is from our new South Dakota State Rep, Jan Baumeister. Go to amlands.org for additional information on South Dakota.

PUBLIC LANDS NEWS:

The February 17th issue of the Rapid City Journal, Rapid City, SD has an article stating that one of the branches of Sierra Club, "Defenders of the Black Hills" are delaying efforts for the National Guard's plans for troops to train on 800 acres (out of over 100,000 acres) of the Buffalo Gap Grasslands in Western South Dakota. The National Guard have picked areas of arid, treeless terrain that would help simulate conditions in Afghanistan and Iraq. The "Defenders" are protesting that radiation levels caused by uranium deposits at or near the surface were "likely" to be harmful to soldiers during training exercises. The B.H. group of Sierra Club challenged the National Guards' environmental assessment process last year due to impact maneuvers on grassland "ecosystem and wildlife." They are not one bit concerned about workmen in the uranium field at Edgement, or the hundreds of acres destroyed with deep holes and grass eaten to the roots, making the grassland bare on the Buffalo Gap Grasslands.

It was the efforts of the National Guard that stopped Senator Johnson's bill in Congress three years ago to put all of the grasslands along Cheyenne River into "Wilderness. The Forest Service's "almost roadless plans" closed our trails and is now in effect. The elderly have to walk miles or stay home! Their new effort now is another plan to get National Guards off these areas! It is all part of the *Northern Plains Conservation Networks'* great vision plans to get all of the northern plains put into millions of acres of Wilderness for Buffalo Pastures.

READ: www.npcn.net/index.php/pages/vision

Contact South Dakota Governor Dennis Daugaard: www.dennis-daugaard.net,

phone: 605-773-3212 and your own state Governor, US Congressional Senators and Representatives and ask them to support the South Dakota National Guard on this concern.

Janice Baumeister, ALAA South Dakota Rep

VICE PRESIDENT ASIDE COMMENTS

I just removed 6 inches of partly cloudy from my drive way. After listening to everyone brag about Quartzsite for all of these years we finally made it to Quartzsite. Yes we had a meeting and a BLM clean-up. If it wasn't for meetings I probably would not have been to any place. If you have not been to Quartzsite, one of the mysteries that bothered me was where was Tyson Wells. Tyson Wells is not a community but the name of one of the show sites. Quartzsite does not have the best signs showing street names, so we did a lot of going past and then coming back.

Thursday was seeing part of the show and then the Old Timers Auction, which was well attended and did well.

Friday morning was seeing part of the show and at noon the Executive Board meeting, open to anyone, then back to seeing the shows. Friday evening was the ALAA Meeting with about 93 people attending. The main theme of the meeting was about the travel plan for the area around Quartzite.

Saturday go see the shows.

Sunday morning was the BLM clean-up about 18 of us showed up and the BLM said that we picked up about 3 tons of trash and then about noon back to the shows.

I wish to thank Larry Clark for distributing about a ream of show fliers advertising the Meeting and to John Martin and Marion Roberts for getting the meeting place for the Executive Board meeting and to Shirley Leeson for arranging for the meeting.

Lauren Williams, ALAA Vice-President

ALAA Excerpts for the Midwest Federation

by Tom Noe, ALAA Midwest

A few months ago I started sending out short excerpts from the *ALAA Newsletter* to the bulletin editors in the MWF. I told the editors they could reprint these excerpts in their monthly club bulletins and newsletters, and a lot of them are doing it. Each excerpt is a couple of paragraphs, and it details some aspect of the work that ALAA is involved in. One, for example, made the very simple point that legislators do listen to input from constituents. Another explained that ALAA is an advocate for less restrictive land-use policies by government agencies. Each excerpt has only one main point.

I figured this would achieve several goals:

- Educate rockhounds in the MWF about ALAA and its work.
- Publicize ALAA (and do it for free).
- Encourage clubs to become members of ALAA.
- Encourage individuals to become members of ALAA.
- Help editors to fill space. (I'm a former editor; I know what it's like.)
- Specifically make rockhounds in the MWF aware that land-use policies affect them as well as rockhounds out west. We have our own state and national forests, reservoirs, sanctuaries, etc., that are managed by federal or state agencies. So, I specifically try to send information that is tailored to our MWF members—people who probably aren't as aware of the land-use issues as folks in, say, California or Montana.

After I sent my first e-mail, more than a dozen editors replied that they would be running the articles in their newsletters. I assume that more than that actually print them. (Nobody has asked me not to send them!) One club that receives the mailings just joined ALAA, so perhaps my mail-

ings had some influence on that decision.

Interestingly, I've found out that MWF editors—and I assume rockhounds in general—have quite a wide range of positions on how public lands ought to be managed. Right now MWF rockhounds need to become more aware of what's happening. I'm going to provide information, not lobby for one specific approach. I want to help people become more informed and knowledgeable so they can make up their own minds.

WHAT'S HAPPENING IN BLM'S DESERT DISTRICT

By Kim Campbell Erb

The fight to preserve access to our public lands continues, but the players sometimes change.

As many of you know, I was appointed to represent 'recreation' on the Bureau of Land Management's California Desert District Advisory Council ("DAC"). Here is a link to the website so that you can find out for yourself what's been happening at these meetings: <http://www.blm.gov/ca/st/en/info/rac/dac.html>. In fact, the BLM's website is very interesting and there is a lot to be learned by simply visiting and exploring their website. The California Desert District is comprised of 5 sub-regions, each with its own BLM field office. The map showing these sub-regions can be found here: <http://www.blm.gov/ca/st/en/fo/cdd.html>, along with links to each of the field offices on the left margin. You can obtain quite a bit of information at these pages, including proposed alternative energy projects, rockhound locations, etc., by exploring these pages. When you see what's planned for our public lands, you just might realize how important it is that you get involved.

One of the things achieved by the DAC at the last meeting was the adoption of a resolution requesting that the BLM urge the U.S Marine Corps. to limit the proposed expansion of the

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WHAT'S HAPPENING IN BLM'S DESERT DISTRICT

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29 Palms Marine Base further west into Johnson Valley to the minimum time (two weeks maximum, twice per year) and no live fire in the expansion area, under an exclusive use permit issued by the BLM, to apply only during such period. We strongly support our military, but the proposed expansion would greatly exceed what is necessary and create permanent harm to everyone else affected by it.

Currently, the Desert Renewable Energy Conservation Plan ("DRECP") and the many, many proposed renewable energy projects under review in this area, and numerous others across all states in the desert southwest, are perhaps the biggest threat to our access. The Federal government as well as the State of California have established aggressive mandates for the amount of energy that must come from renewable energy sources such as wind, solar and geothermal projects. The DRECP is a plan by which renewable energy projects can be fast-tracked. Although it is very complex and challenging, everyone who cares about having access to our public lands for any recreational purpose should familiarize himself/herself because it will be affecting us all for many years to come. Here is a link to their website: <http://www.drecp.org/>. ***They need to hear from all of us***, but they have not received much input from the recreational community in general and the rockhound community specifically.

The day prior to each DAC meeting the BLM has a field trip for the DAC members, and the public is welcome to follow along in private vehicles. One of the places visited during the field trip prior to the last DAC meeting in February, 2013 (which focused on renewable energy), was the site for the proposed Soda Mountain Solar Project, which would be located at the Razor Road offramp of Highway 15. The map can be viewed online here: [http://www.blm.gov/pgdata/etc/medialib/blm/ca/pdf/Barstow/soda_mountain.Par.34822.File.dat/Project%](http://www.blm.gov/pgdata/etc/medialib/blm/ca/pdf/Barstow/soda_mountain.Par.34822.File.dat/Project%20Location%20Map.pdf)

[20Location%20Map.pdf](http://www.blm.gov/pgdata/etc/medialib/blm/ca/pdf/Barstow/soda_mountain.Par.34822.File.dat/Project%20Location%20Map.pdf) It is hard to visualize the project when you see it on paper, but the enormity of it is simply *staggering* when you are on the ground. It stretches from the base of the Cady Mountains on the West to the base of the base of the Soda Mountains on the north, to Zzyzyx Road to the northeast, and the base of that portion of the Soda Mountains that lie behind the Desert Studies Center at Zzyzyx. This would require realigning Razor Road and fencing off this entire area, with the exception of the freeway and the access road(s). Talk about *loss of access*...

Now, I am no environmentalist, but I love the desert and I treasure all of the little critters and plants we encounter when we are out there (perhaps with the exception of a few things like bees and rattlesnakes). You don't have to be a genius to figure out how destructive this solar project would be to an ecosystem that relies on having bright sunshine (and strong heat for most of the year) all day. You just can't scrape the ground and put thousands of solar panels on the ground, creating shade, without creating extreme changes to the ecosystem. What these changes would do to the environment have never been studied. It will certainly kill many of the existing species. How can the method of creating this kind of energy be called "green"???

Renewable energy projects create strange bedfellows. This is one of those times that we share concerns with environmentalists. Perhaps if enough rockhounds and other caring recreationists work together with the environmentalists to challenge the prudence of such projects, the environmentalists will see that we are not a threat to the desert environment. This is a great opportunity to show them how much we care.

These are not our only threats. Diane Feinstein has renewed her quest to add much of the remaining public lands to the existing bank of wilderness, national monuments, national parks, conservation lands and more. There are many groups who would like to close many of the routes we currently rely on to access our favorite

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WHAT'S HAPPENING IN BLM'S DESERT DISTRICT

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collecting areas.

There is an open seat on the DAC representing the 'public at large' that the BLM is seeking to find candidates for. If you would like to make a difference and help protect access to public lands for future generations of rockhounds, please apply! The application can be found in the left-hand column under "Information" at this page: <http://www.blm.gov/ca/st/en/info/rac/dac.html>. It would be great to have like-minded individuals trying to make a difference.

SOMETHING SPECIAL FOR THE ALAA MEETING AT KENNEWICK

"A VOICE IN THE WILDERNESS"
Saturday, April 20 Benton Fairgrounds,
Kennewick, Washington

We will have John George of Bates, Oregon speak to ALAA Saturday afternoon immediately following the NFMS Director's meeting. John is a special person. Not everyone is willing to stand up for their convictions and take on the Wallawa-Whitmann Forest Service.

All of us have had an instant where we've said to ourselves, "I wish I could do something, I wish I could make a difference." Well, meet John George, a "ranchhand" by his definition. His family has been in the mountains here in North-east Oregon for 92 years. He's a hunter, like many men in the area. He has tangled with the Forest Service "travel management plan" which closes roads indiscriminately, many times for no given reason. His skirmishes are becoming legendary and I want you all to hear him and be inspired. Even newspapers as far away as Portland have had these meetings of the Forest Service and John covered.

EVERYONE IS WELCOME, bring a friend and be inspired..... I've been ever since we heard from John in late 2012. A single person CAN MAKE A DIFFERENCE.

Shirley Leeson, ALAA

NMOHVA lawsuit against the Santa Fe National Forest, New Mexico

The NMOHVA lawsuit against the Santa Fe National Forest is in its very early stages. We now have a schedule, but we know those dates can shift. We have a couple of weeks left for the initial 'grunt work'. It is tedious, but very critical and detailed grunt work; reviewing the Administrative Record. That is the record of all the documents used for writing the environmental impact statement. The lawsuit and the arguments must be entirely based on the written record of the environmental impact statement and how it was done. This is not like a regular trial with witnesses and testimony. The Forest Service has submitted an Excel spreadsheet with the list of documents and brief descriptions. There are 1,282 separate items. It includes all sorts of documents: agendas and notes from meetings of the interdisciplinary team, decisions about roads to leave out, directives from the forest supervisor for protocols and setting priorities, steering committee notes, field surveys, background reports from the specialists, news releases, communications with tribes and state agencies, communications with the public. We have to figure out if anything we need for our case is missing from the list. We can eliminate over half of the items easily, but we'll have to scan through the rest. It's impossible to predict what is in a document titled 'IDT Subcommittee Meeting Notes: Developing the 'Hybrid' Alternative', or 'Regional Office Guidance on Routes in Inventoried Roadless Areas'. We have six specific points in the lawsuit. Does anything in those documents apply to any of our points? No way to know without looking at them. We also have to go back through the Final EIS itself, and see if it refers to anything that is not included in the Administrative Record. There are some 500 or more pages of the EIS and Specialist Reports to review. It's a huge amount of work. We are doing it ourselves for two reasons; we have the intimate familiarity with the documents and the issues. That familiarity saves time. We know what to look for, and where. Second, every hour of our works save legal fees. NMOHVA is greatly appreciative of the donations from ALAA and other organizations and individuals. We are acutely aware of the trust being put in us to do the best possible job on this lawsuit, and we're committed to using those dollars wisely.

Joanne Spivack
New Mexico Access Activist

ARE YOU WILLING TO DO A BLM/FORESTRY CLEAN-UP AS PART OF YOUR FIELD TRIPS ON PUBLIC LANDS?

ALAA is asking you to get involved. When you go out on a field trip on public lands, contact the BLM and/or Forestry or State Lands, and **offer to do a clean-up under their direction**. This is key. They will work with you on a location near your campsite, they will have someone on the day of the clean-up there to supervise and have trucks to haul away the trash, etc. TAKE PICTURES of the event. (They will most likely take pictures too)



If you are willing to participate, contact me and I'll send you some ALAA TRASH BAGS – they have our logo and the words “TRASH, Pack more out than In.”

Have them in the front of the picture. The BLM, etc will give you plastic trash bags for the rest of the refuse and trash.

Send pictures with the club name, city and state, and the location of the clean-up and the government body who supervised the event to: info@amlands.org and we'll see they are put up on the website and also do a write up in the ALAA Newsletter. And I suggest you also send

a picture and article to your regional Newsletter editor for recognition there too.

Let's get rockhounds recognized once again. It will help us when we ask the government to keep our public lands open for all of us.



NOTE: Sending ALAA trash bags will take time, PLAN AHEAD.

ALAA SCHEDULE OF COMING EVENTS FOR 2013

April 20: Kennewick, WA. (Northwest)

- ALAA Meeting, immediately following NFMS Director's meeting, (Noon)
- Benton County Fairgrounds, E. 10th Ave & S. Oak St.

May 17-19: Sandy, UT. (Rocky Mountain)

- ALAA Information Table at Salt Lake County Equestrian Park & Event Center, 2100 West, 11400 South, South Jordan, UT (Rocky Mt. Show Site)

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ALAA DUES – A NEW BEGINNING

Shirley Leeson

The Officers and Directors have been struggling with the dues problem for a number of years. We would ask politely for dues to be paid and in a number of cases these pleas went on deaf ears, but we continued to carry them. So at the ALAA Business meeting in Minnetonka, MN last year I asked and received permission to write a letter to each person/club who were in arrears. Letters went out first to those we had carried since 2008 and 2009. I offered them a chance to renew their membership. Some did. The others were dropped. Next, letters went out to those who had not paid since 2010 and 2011. And those who didn't respond were dropped.

Finally letters went out to those who had not paid in 2012. We offered everyone a chance to pay their 2013 dues by February 15th. So we have a leaner group, but we know those who are left are serious in their support. I'm afraid we can't say any longer, "we have 10,000 members and growing" but what we do have left is a dedicated organization. I believe we can rise up out of this, like a phoenix, and be bigger and stronger.

I don't think it's fair to those who are working hard, with no pay, no mileage, spending hours each day holding this organization together –with just the knowledge they are working for the good of all rockhounds - to carry those who hang back and offer nothing. Enough.

At the end of this year, December 1st, a letter will go out reminding each of you that dues are due January 1, 2014 and if we haven't heard from you by February 15th you will be dropped.

In the last ALAA Newsletter, 4th Quarter, (Oct, Nov Dec 2012) we told you of a new position, membership chair. Renewals/Dues will be sent to Colleen McGann, who has graciously taken this important position, letting our Treasurer, Ruth Bailey do the job of Treasurer. Please see the application attached to the Newsletter.

One more item.... If you would recycle your copy of the ALAA Newsletter by giving it to someone you think might join ALAA, either an individual or a club, please do so. We can use all the help we can get to move this organization forward.

Your president, Shirley Leeson

president@amlands.org

ALAA SCHEDULE OF COMING EVENTS FOR 2013

(Continued from page 13)

June 2: Ventura, CA. (California)

- ALAA Meeting on Sunday afternoon 2pm at Seaside Park, 10 W Harbor Blvd.
- ALAA Information Table at the show

August 10: Butte, MT. (Northwest)

- ALAA Meeting on Saturday afternoon, 2pm at Butte Civic Center, 1340 Harrison Ave.
- ALAA Information Table in Lobby of Civic Center

September 21: Jacksonville, FL. (AFMS/Southeast)

- ALAA BUSINESS MEETING, 2:30pm. Marriott, 4670 Salisbury Rd.

**AMERICAN LANDS ACCESS ASSOCIATION. INC
2012-2013 OFFICERS & DIRECTORS**

OFFICERS

PRESIDENT

SHIRLEY LEESON
6155 Haas St.
La Mesa, CA 91942
president@amlands.org

VICE-PRESIDENT

LAUREN WILLIAMS
957 E. 4500
S. Ogden, UT 84403
vice_president@amlands.org

SECRETARY

SUSY MARTIN
1309 W Avenue L-4
Lancaster, CA 93534
secretary@amlands.org

TREASURER

RUTH BAILEY
2857 Addison Pl
Santa Clara, CA 95051
treasurer@amlands.org

MEMBERSHIP

COLLEEN McGANN
P.O. Box 224
Santa Clara, CA 95052
membership@amlands.org

DIRECTORS

Permanent Directors:

Dee Holland, Registered Agent, Idaho
agent@amlands.org

John Martin, Webmaster
webmaster@amlands.org

Jay Valle, Newsletter Editor
editor@amlands.org

Colleen McGann, Membership
membership@amlands.org

Three Year Terms:

Tom Burchard
Tom_burchard@amlands.org

Tom Noe, Midwest
director_2@amlands.org

Dick Pankey
dick_pankey@amlands.org

Two Year Terms

Dr. Bob Carlson, Rocky Mountains
Dr.bob@amlands.org

Doug True, Northwest
director_5@amlands.org

John Wright, Southeast
director_6@amlands.org

One Year Terms

Jon Spunaugle, Northwest
director_7@amlands.org

Evan Day, Northwest
director_8@amlands.org

Kim Campbell Erb
kim_erb@amlands.org

CURRENT ALAA STATE REPRESENTATIVES

CALIFORNIA	Northern:	Dan Brown	california-north@amlands.org
	Central Coast:	Bill Spence	billspace@amlands.org
	Central:	Marion Roberts	california-central@amlands.org
	Southern:	Kim Campbell	california-south@amlands.org
IDAHO	Southern:	Shirley Metts	idaho-south@amlands.org
ILLINOIS		John & Judith Washburn	illinois@amlands.org
INDIANA		Kathy & Bob Miller	indiana@amlands.org
MISSISSIPPI		John Wright	mississippi@amlands.org
MONTANA		Doug True	montana@amlands.org
NEVADA		Norvie Enns	nevada@amlands.org
NEW MEXICO		Bob Carlson	new_mexico@amlands.org
NORTH CAROLINA		Carl Talbott	carl_talbot@amlands.org
OHIO		Tom Noe	ohio@amlands.org
OKLAHOMA		Richard Jaeger	oklahoma@amlands.org
SOUTH DAKOTA		Jan Baumeister	jan_baumeister@amlands.org
TEXAS		Terry Proctor	texas@amlands.org
UTAH		Evan Day	utah@amlands.org
WASHINGTON	Central	Andy Johnson	washington-central@amlands.org
	Eastern	Everett Headrick	washington-idaho@amlands.org
	Eastern	Bev Bockman	washington-idaho@amlands.org

HELP THE ENVIRONMENT, recycle your ALAA Newsletter by passing it along to another rockhound or rock club.
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