

## Meeting Summary

### Welcome

The meeting began with introductions and a review of the agenda, which included presentations on tourism and outdoor recreation in Coachella Valley, and a second presentation on AB 518, a bill impacting low-impact camping in California.

John Wentworth provided updates on federal and state budget issues, climate change efforts, and wildfire concerns, emphasizing the need for continued monitoring and engagement. Questions were asked about federal grant funding for Yosemite and Sequoia and Kings Canyon, which John mentioned would be discussed at the upcoming ESSRP meeting.

### Coachella Valley Conservation Insights

Billy Morrow, a program specialist with the Coachella Valley Conservation Commission, shared his professional journey, including roles at the Palm Springs aerial tramway, Big Wheel Tours, and The Living Desert Zoo and Gardens.

He highlighted significant events and developments in the Coachella Valley related to tourism, such as music festivals and housing projects like Disney's Cotino and the Thermal Club. Billy expressed enthusiasm for his current role, which involves managing and monitoring conservation lands, and noted the potential impact of upcoming housing developments in the area.

### Palm Springs Natural Disasters Impact

Billy discussed several natural events affecting the area around Palm Springs. He mentioned a flood in 2019 that shut down the tramway for 40 days, and a more recent flood in August 2023 from Tropical Storm Hilary that affected Eagle Canyon and Mission Creek. Billy also talked about the 2025 Rosa fire in the Santa Rosa Mountains, which burned parts of the Palm Canyon Trail, causing it to be closed indefinitely. All these incidents impact recreation and tourism in the area.

### Coachella Valley Projects Overview

Billy presented an overview of projects and departments in the Coachella Valley related to conservation, including transportation initiatives like CV Sync and CV Link, housing assistance for the homeless, renewable energy efforts through Desert Community Energy, and conservation work by the Coachella Valley Conservation Commission. He highlighted the completion of a Peninsular bighorn sheep fence and ongoing efforts to establish a conservation

ranger ordinance in Riverside County. Billy also discussed recent acquisitions, including North Shore Ranch near the Salton Sea, which will be used for research and potential future projects.

Morrow also discussed the overlap of recreation and tourism in the Coachella Valley, highlighting the intersection with arts, culture, housing, and conservation. He mentioned his involvement with the UNESCO Biosphere Region of the Mojave Desert.

### California AB 518 Update

Michal presented an update on AB 518, a bill with near unanimous bipartisan support in the California State Legislature that aims to expand outdoor access and protect private land. Assembly Bill 518 aims to expand outdoor access and protect private land through low-impact camping regulations. Michal provided an update on legislative efforts, noting that AB 518 had made progress but was still awaiting Senate Review before the end of the legislative session September 12. Calder highlighted the support from Senator Mike McGuire and discussed the connection between agritourism and the bill. The group discussed the potential benefits of low-impact camping and the need for regulatory pathways. Michal also explained the complexities of SB 346 and the concerns about defining camping as short-term rentals.

### Wrap Up

The conversation ended with plans for upcoming events and a reminder of the next meeting on October 3rd.