

Marine Base Expansion Dominates Dec 16 Meeting in Johnson Valley

As we awaited the finalizing vote in Congress on the expansion of the Marine Base into Johnson Valley, HVCC guests included people closely involved with the long battle. Harry Baker of the Partnership for Johnson Valley, who hosted focus groups with the Marines from the very beginning, met with everyone, and took the message all over the country, was on hand and brought maps and other information in case they were called for.

visitors. He implored her help to postpone final action to find even more of a compromise. That did not happen. The Senate version and Cook's version went their respective Armed Services Committees, and there they sat, in conflict, among many other issues.

The NDAA has to be passed by the first of the year.

With no conference committee and no compromise, it would now go to a committee of two House members and two Senate mem-

bers, to either pick the Marines version, or pick Paul Cook's version, no changes, no amendments. That's where they were two weeks ago. It became clear at that time that the Marine Corps version would prevail over Cook's version, by a vote of 3 to 1.



Dawn Rowe, aide to Congressman Paul Cook clarified the basics of the political timeline for us.

The Marine Corps presented six alternative plans for expansion that would best meet their training needs. Their preferred Alternative 6 would take the lion's share of the Johnson Valley OHV Area, leaving little for its intended recreational use.

Congressman Paul Cook, representing his 8th District constituents, introduced complementary legislation, based on Alternative 4, which passed the House unanimously. In July his language was included in the House National Defense Authorization Act for 2014, which includes all defense spending.

The Senate sat on their version of NDAA until recently.

The Marine Corps, through the Department of Defense, introduced Alternative 6 language. Traditionally when two bills don't match, they go to a conference committee of both the houses to iron out the differences.

Paul Cook then could have asked Senator Feinstein to withdraw the Johnson Valley language from both bills, to further address the safety concerns of both residents and

The latest compromise pushed back the boundary in the east and increased shared use between the public and the military. A major benefit: the Shared Use Area will remain under BLM administration, so there is no threat of future Base expansion into that area.

Marines wanted barbed wire fencing the entire 70 miles of the new border. Not a good idea, riders in full face helmets, perhaps at night, cannot see a wire fence. Cook asked that natural barriers be used as much as possible, chain link fencing elsewhere, based on topography.

Their were many different user groups, competing interests for recreational use of public land. One was desert racing. Dawn Rowe introduced Dave Cole to those who did not know him already, saying he was consulted frequently, as the King of the Hammers annual event that he produces draws a lot of economic benefit into the area.

Dave said the Hammers race will lose 87% of it race course area, but not yet. This last year of full access, the February 7th course will take the racers everywhere. all around through this beautiful place.

HOMESTEAD VALLEY COMMUNITY COUNCIL



One Voice for the People of Homestead Valley

Next Meetings:

- Monday, January 20, 3:00 pm
at Flamingo Heights
- Monday, February 17, 3:00 pm
at Landers

Dave Cole Talks to HVCC about Future of Johnson Valley OHV

Dave Cole is a co-founder and producer of the King of the Hammers, a venture that began as an informal competition among friends and expanded into an international off-highway vehicle racing circuit with the crowning event in Johnson Valley as its climax.

At the December 16 HVCC meeting he was asked by Dawn Rowe to speak about his take on the Marine Base expansion.

He speaks of the California Motorized Recreation Council (CMRC, pronounced Camrac), the umbrella organization for the eight largest OHV groups in California, who joined in the effort to save public access to Johnson Valley.

“Speaking about the political process, which I’m not good at, I am thankful for Harry Baker and the Partnership for Johnson Valley, and the Camrac group, who worked so long, over six years.

“My gut level says, I’m happy that we didn’t end up where we were going to be four weeks ago. But riding that roller coaster of, we’re going to win this, we’re going to lose this, back and forth, was probably the most tiresome thing, I’m absolutely drained.

“I was here in Johnson Valley this weekend, heard the same artillery you heard, saw helicopters flying overhead, called Dawn to tell her how (mad) I was. I’m still (mad).

“But where we are now is because we all banded together. I’m going to buy a house here. I’m happy we have land left. It’s hard to wrap my head around, that anybody actually cares about the King of the Hammers, but from the King of

the Hammers perspective, we’re not going anywhere. We are here as long as you guys, our neighbors, will have us here, as long as we keep earning your respect and trust in us racing here. I’m happy about that.

“Thanks for being good neighbors and helping to keep our lands open and being good supporters, and hopefully we can be the same to you guys...

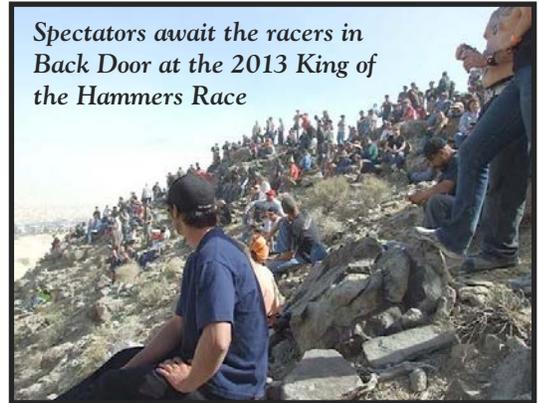
“Also, I want to comment about this politically, I’m really not good at this.

“Paul Cook was amazing.

“I met with him before the election and he told me, I can’t possibly go against the Marines, I’m not going to do it. If you are going to vote for me because of this, don’t vote for me. I’m a retired colonel and I can’t do this.

We did not stop, we kept pushing him on it, pushing him on it, again with CMRC and everybody else, and once he saw the facts of it he became our biggest ally.

“There is no chance whatsoever we would have gotten *anything* out of this, if it wasn’t for Paul Cook, Dawn and the entire staff.”



Spectators await the racers in Back Door at the 2013 King of the Hammers Race

PHOTO BY BILL LEMBRIGHT

Sheriff Supplies Recreational Shooting Maps

Sgt. Rick Collins in response to inquiries from the public, researched the latest recreational shooting maps, including the 2011 County map. He supplied links which will be posted on www.havccsite.org.

He reported OHV complaints are down in general. Green sticker OHV license funds pay for grants for addressing OHV issues, but have been borrowed by the state.

County Fire Recruiting Paid-Call Firefighters

Battalion Chief Mike Snow told the HVCC that to get staff back up as call volume requires they are recruiting paid call firefighters, Local fire stations remain unstaffed until pagers are activated and paid-call personnel can go to station, pick up apparatus and respond to the call.

The goal is to add permanent fire and medical staff as funds allow. If you are interested, apply at www.sbcfire.org.

www.hvccsite.org

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HVCC = Johnson Valley + Yucca Mesa + Flamingo Heights + Landers

A RESOLUTION
by the Homestead Valley Community Council
Opposing Lifting of the San Bernardino County
Solar Moratorium Until Amendment can be Made
Addressing the Problems of Permitting Industrial
Renewable Energy Projects in Rural Living Zones

WHEREAS, the Homestead Valley Community Council is a coalition of the four Homestead Valley communities of Johnson Valley, Landers, Flamingo Heights and Yucca Mesa; and

WHEREAS these desert communities share a common history and economy, and common goals as established by community consensus in the Homestead Valley General Plan of 2007; and

WHEREAS the Homestead Valley Community Council is currently seeking Scenic Highway designation for State Highway 247, which connects the communities with Yucca Valley, Lucerne Valley and Barstow; and

WHEREAS any industrial projects in the Homestead Valley will have a devastating impact on valuable scenic attributes and our largely visitor-generated economy, counter to our scenic designation mission; and

WHEREAS industrial projects will reduce the value of the properties in and around the project areas; and

WHEREAS most of the Homestead Valley is zoned by the County of San Bernardino as RL, Rural Living; and

WHEREAS private properties within the RL Zones have been bought and/or leased to industrial solar enterprises; and

WHEREAS the County deviations from the County and Homestead Valley General Plans of 2007 allowed detrimental alteration of the desert soils, air quality, drainage, water usage, vegetation, habitat, viewshed and community character by these industrial solar enterprises through the issuance of Conditional Use Permits, and

WHEREAS there was little or no publicity concerning these actions perceived by owners of nearby properties or other stakeholders until these alterations had commenced; and

WHEREAS industrial land use within RL Zones creates a Public Nuisance in violation of Cal. Civil Code §3480, San Bernardino County Ordinance §33.034, and the 2007 County General Plan; and

WHEREAS these violations negatively impact the rights and privileges of a considerable number of residents and property owners in the affected neighborhoods; and

WHEREAS other properties within the RL Zones already bought and/or leased by commercial solar enterprises were not permitted due to the County Solar Moratorium extended by the Board of Supervisors in July 2013; and

WHEREAS the County General Plan is the law, and trumps any ordinance on land use; and

WHEREAS so-called “spot zoning” with Conditional Use Permits allowing land uses incompatible with the General Plan is illegal; and

WHEREAS the General Plan must be amended in order for the County to allow such variances, just as exceptions to a constitution can only be allowed by the deliberate and more stringent amendment process; and

WHEREAS industrial/commercial renewable energy projects are by their very description incompatible with General Plan RL Zoning; and

WHEREAS if any Renewable Energy Zones may be established at all by amendment of the County General Plan, the residents and property owners in or near those zones could and would be better able to participate fully in the decision-making process; and

WHEREAS the amendment process will allow stakeholders to urge the benefits of alternative solar energy generation on the roofs of governmental and commercial buildings, schools, parking lots and housetops in already-built areas of the County, and allow the County to create local jobs, improve property values and enhance local revenues; and

WHEREAS the County’s moratorium on permitting of industrial solar installations must stay in place until the General Plan can be reviewed and revised, always keeping in mind established community characteristics; and

WHEREAS land use ordinance can then be legally updated to fit into the parameters of the General Plan,

THEREFORE we urge the County for its own protection to keep the Solar Moratorium in effect until due diligence review and amendment of the General Plan can be accomplished. UNANIMOUSLY APPROVED AND ADOPTED this 21st day of October 2013