



Edwards Air Force Base
95th Air Base Wing
Environmental Management

Report to **STAKEHOLDERS**

February 2008

Volume 13 No. 2

BIG FIND

Old drums found during
new Air Force runway
construction

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Report to STAKEHOLDERS

Report to Stakeholders is a publication of Edwards Air Force Base, 95th Air Base Wing, Environmental Management. Its purpose is to inform and educate the public, base workers and residents about continuing environmental and safety efforts on base. It currently has a circulation of 6,000, including about 2,000 subscribers.

Contents of the *Report to Stakeholders* are not necessarily the official view of, or endorsed by, the U.S. government, the Department of Defense or the Department of the Air Force.

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Thursday, April 17

10 a.m. - 2 p.m.

Mobile Home Park

across from the BX

EARTH DAY 08

Confronting Climate Change in California and Around the Globe

Scheduled Events & Displays

Workshops on Global Climate Change

Renewable Energy Demonstrations

Air Quality Demonstrations

Liquid Nitrogen Ice Cream

Live Snakes and Desert Tortoises

Environmental Buzz Game and Prizes

Vendors Selling Environmentally Friendly Wares

Archaeology Display

Minerals and Geology

Eddie the Edwards

Tortoise

Hybrid Cars

Live Music



Environmental Management (EM) is looking for organizations and vendors who would like to set up a booth at the event. This is a great opportunity to get your message out to housing residents and base workers. Booths will be located inside a large tent provided by EM. For more information on events or booths, please contact Heidi Gesiriech at 277-7049 or 277-1401. The deadline to schedule a booth is March 21, 2008, and space is limited, so early registration is advised.



What's on the cover?

DIGGING OUT — These drums were excavated during grading for the Air Force runway construction project. Over 700 drums were found and taken away in roll-off bins.

CAUGHT!

Federal jury finds Edwards coyote poacher guilty



POACHED — From left, U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service Special agent Ed Newcomer Jr., and California Department of Fish and Game Warden Martin Smith examine a coyote that was shot on Edwards Air Force Base by a poacher.

Jurors deliberated for less than an hour before coming back with a guilty verdict in the case of a man, trespassing on Edwards Air Force Base, who killed a female coyote and then dragged the body off the base before abandoning it.

U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service Special Agent Ed Newcomer credits the detailed observations of range riders Ivan Sergejev and Steve Kramme with the ease of the conviction. “Everything came together to make the case,” Newcomer said. “It’s usually very difficult to prosecute these cases. The good observations of Ivan and Steve made it easier.”

On Feb. 11, 2007, Sergejev and Kramme saw a small sport-utility vehicle in an area just outside the base boundary where there are no dirt roads. They wrote down the vehicle’s license plate number to give to base Security Forces in the event that they discovered evidence of unauthorized activity later.

Range riders never approach people suspected of trespassing on base. They document seeing people or a vehicle and investigate the area after they leave. If they find something, they report their observations to Security Forces. However, the range riders were surprised when the driver stopped to talk to them.

“He stopped and told us pretty much everything,” Sergejev said. “As he was giving us the details, we were taking notes.”

The defendant, David Cannon of Canoga Park, Calif., told the range riders he had shot and killed a coyote. He then dragged the carcass off base and left it in the desert “because the pelt was too bloody for him to use” according to Kramme.

Sergejev added, “he said he’d taken enough pelts the previous year to make a blanket.”

After a few minutes, the range riders said Cannon started to get nervous, asked why they were out there, and left. They followed Cannon’s tire tracks back to a section of fence where the barbed wire had been cut. They found the dead coyote about 200 yards off base. “It was still warm,” Kramme said.

The range riders immediately called agent Newcomer and base Security Forces. Newcomer and the California Department of Fish and Game Warden Martin Smith were at the site 90 minutes later. They set up a crime scene investigation and collected evidence, including three spent rifle cartridges, and took pictures of pools of blood on base, drag marks and tire tracks.

When Cannon was questioned later by authorities, he admitted using an electronic calling device that sounds like a wounded rabbit to try to lure the coyote off base.

The base does not allow hunting of predators like coyotes. Cannon was charged with violating the Lacey Act, a federal wildlife protection law that prohibits the illegal transportation of wildlife taken while violating state or federal law and regulations such as trespassing on federal property. The penalties for violating the Lacey Act are greater than just illegally hunting on base.

The three-day trial ended Oct. 11, 2007. Sergejev was on the stand twice.

Cannon’s sentencing hearing was scheduled for Dec. 20, but it has been delayed.

Biologists track desert tortoises during hibernation season

As late fall arrived at Edwards Air Force Base, the bright desert sun heated the uneven brown landscape.

One October afternoon Mark Bratton, a biologist for Environmental Management, patiently walked the sandy desert floor with a radio receiver hanging from one arm and an antenna in the other hand in search of desert tortoises.

The hand-held radio receiver soon emitted “beeps,” notifying biologists that a female desert tortoise was nearby. Escalating “beeps” from the receiver allow biologists to pinpoint the location of desert tortoises around Edwards. This survey is performed at least once a month.

“The tortoises we track are all females. They are used in the head starting program at Edwards,” Bratton said. “We don’t want to lose track of them, which is why we track the tortoises at least once a month.”



TRANSMITTER — *This female desert tortoise has a radio transmitter on her shell so base biologists can track her whereabouts.*

The head starting program at Edwards is a study base biologists are conducting to increase the survivability of juvenile desert tortoises into adulthood, or to an age where they can start adding to the breeding desert tortoise population.

“It is important to keep track of the females with transmitters on them to make sure they are alive and healthy,” Bratton added. “It is also important to track tortoises so that we learn more about

where they go, and why they go where they do go.”

The tortoises are tracked through a transmitter that is attached to their shell.

“On our most recent tracking venture, we found a male tortoise that was occupying a burrow that was previously used by a female tortoise,” Bratton said. “We were near the global positioning system (GPS) location for the female tortoise and could hear the beeping from the radio



TRACKING — *A base biologist, left, uses a radio transmitter tracking device to locate desert tortoises.*

Desert Tortoise Facts

- Desert tortoises live in half-moon-shaped burrows
- 95 percent of a desert tortoise’s life is spent in underground burrows
- The desert tortoise is able to live where ground temperatures may exceed 140 degrees Fahrenheit
 - Females do not breed until they are 15 to 20 years old
 - Female desert tortoise eggs are laid between late spring and early summer
 - Female desert tortoises have longer back nails than males do
- The survival rate of juveniles is low: only two to three per 100 hatchlings may live to become adults

transmitter.

"I knew she was nearby, but didn't know her exact location," Bratton added. "The female tortoise was located shortly after she moved to a new burrow. We were able to locate all of the female tortoises and enter the coordinates of the new burrow.

"Male tortoises tend to move around a lot more than females do," he added. "However, at this time of year, most tortoises are moving back to their burrows for hibernation."

During the egg-laying season, which occurs in late spring or early summer, the desert tortoise is given an x-ray to check the status of her eggs. If she is laden with eggs, the biologists will temporarily relocate her to the head starting pens where she lays her eggs.

When the tortoise is finished laying eggs, the biologists return her to the exact location where she was found.

Female desert tortoises typically lay four to eight eggs per clutch, with one to two clutches per year. The eggs are hard, chalky and round, and buried in a funnel-shaped nest. They incubate for 90 to 120 days before hatching. According to Bratton, only a few hatchlings out of every hundred actually survive the seven to 15 years it takes to reach full adulthood.

The desert tortoise is native to the Mojave Desert. Due to the cold winter months the desert tortoise will hibernate from November through February or March. It lives in a range of habitat; from sandy flats to rocky foothills, and can live to be 100 years old.

“
The tortoises we track are all females that are a part of the head starting program at Edwards. We don't want to lose track of them, which is why we track the tortoises at least once a month.

Mark Bratton
Biologist
Environmental Management



RTS

BOBCAT sighting at EM

A range rider spotted this bobcat outside the Environmental Management building one weekend in November and snapped this photo of it with prey.

Bobcats are inhabitants of Edwards Air Force Base. These particular felines are skittish animals and will usually shy away from people.

Bobcats have a 25-30 inch body, and weigh about 15-35 pounds. A bobcat's fur is yellowish-brown to reddish brown with black spots, face ruff, black tufts on its ears and a short, bobbed, tail — thus its name.



OLD DRUMS UNEARTHED

MOVING A SMALL MOUNTAIN — More than 700 drums, unearthed during excavation for the new temporary runway on base, were hauled away using eleven 40-cubic-yard roll-off bins. A corner of a 40-yard bin is visible to the right, behind the pile of drums. The smaller 20-cubic-yard roll-off bin, far right, was used to haul away the small amount of contaminated soil.



Old drums found during new Air Force runway construction

COLLECTION — Hazardous waste experts Cat McDonald, left, and Glenn Beshara examine the tar substance found in a small percentage of the drums.

Environmental experts dug up more than 700 steel drums containing small amounts of petroleum-based tar at the Edwards Air Force Base temporary runway site in December 2007. The drums are believed to be left over from the original construction of Main Base.

“We knew that something might be out there,” said Rebecca Hobbs, South Base environmental program manager. “But for many years, we didn’t find anything.”

Labels with dates on them were located on several of the drums. These labels indicated that they were buried in the 1940s and early 1950s.

“The drums were so old, the dirt was keeping their structures intact,” Hobbs said. “As we took the drums out of the ground, they began to break apart.”

A small quantity of the drums contained a black substance confirmed by analytical tests to be petroleum-based tar. The rest were empty or filled with dirt.

Under the Comprehensive Environmental Response, Compensation, and Liability Act of 1980 (CERCLA), petroleum-only sites are exempt from the federal cleanup process. Instead, Hobbs coordinated the excavation project directly with the Kern County Environmental Health Services Department.

“If we had encountered a substance other than petroleum products, we would have stopped work immediately and contacted our state and federal regulators,” Hobbs said.

In all, three different sites were identified along the runway construction path. Construction workers uncovered the first site while skimming the top layer of soil to level the ground at the temporary runway location.

“The workers halted their activity and contacted Civil Engineering, the office through which all base construction is handled,” Hobbs said. “Civil Engineering contacted Environmental Management and



STILL SOME TAR — Only a few drums found at South Base contained tar, the rest were empty. The drums did not break apart until they were pulled out of the ground, so there was no release of tar into the soil.

we went out to investigate.”

During further grading of the runway project area, two other sites were located. Of the three sites, two contained drums and one contained trash. After analytical results confirmed there were

no hazardous materials at the trash site, it was released to the runway contractor for further grading.

The majority of the excavated drums filled eleven 40-cubic-yard roll-off bins. Drums containing liquid tar were put into 24 overpack containers. Overpack containers are designed specifically to transport leaky

drums and liquids. Contaminated soil filled one 20-cubic-yard roll-off bin.

After removing drums, other debris,

and contaminated soil, environmental experts took soil samples and waited for results before releasing the sites.

Soil samples were analyzed using U.S. Environmental Protection Agency methods that checked for volatile organics, semivolatile organics, polycyclic aromatic hydrocarbons and polychlorinated biphenyls. These compounds are hazardous waste elements associated with old aircraft testing and maintenance areas. The soil was also tested for metals and mercury.

“We confirmed that the soil was clean where any drums were found before we allowed the excavation crew to backfill the sites,” Hobbs said.

Throughout the drum excavation project, construction on the temporary runway proceeded. Hobbs attributes the project’s success to careful planning and teamwork.

“A petroleum cleanup of this size was a first for the base,” Hobbs said. “All I had to do was make sure everyone involved understood their responsibilities and coordinated with each other at the right time. Then I let the experts do their jobs.”

“Now if we run across another mountain of drums, we’ll know exactly what has to be done.”

“

We confirmed that the soil was clean where any drums were found before we allowed the excavation crew to backfill the sites.

Rebecca Hobbs
Program Manager
Environmental Restoration Program

”

Reducing carbon dioxide levels begins with simple lifestyle changes

People can reduce the amount of carbon dioxide released into the atmosphere by making a few simple lifestyle changes that can be easily incorporated into their everyday lives.

Reducing carbon dioxide is important because it has been linked to climate change.

“We’re not asking people to radically change the way they live,” said Robert Wood, director of Environmental Management. “We’re just asking people to look at the way they do things in a different light.”

The U.S. Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) defines climate change as any significant change in measures of climate, such as temperature, precipitation, or wind that lasts for an extended length of time (decades or longer). Global warming is one such phenomenon that has been publicized worldwide.

“We burn fossil fuels whenever we need to produce energy,” Wood said. “The burning of fossil fuels is the main reason for the upward trend of atmospheric carbon dioxide.”

According to the U.S. EPA, greenhouse gases – consisting mainly of carbon dioxide – are released as a result of the energy used for transportation, electricity and through other activities like growing food and raising livestock.

For example, power plants burn fossil fuels to produce energy. This energy is used to power homes and businesses.

“Instead of burning these fossil fuels and releasing carbon dioxide into the air, we should look at alternatives and simple-fix solutions to energy,” Wood added.

“Using ENERGY STAR® appliances in the home and office mean that less energy is needed overall. These appliances not only save the consumer money but they also reduce the amount of fossil fuels burned for energy.

Plans have started at Edwards to install a solar energy plant. The goal is to make the base self-reliant on solar energy to support all of its power needs.”

Wood suggests reusing plastic bottles and buying music online as examples of lifestyle changes for reducing carbon dioxide. Buying music online eliminates the need for potential carbon dioxide created from the production of CD albums, the shipping to stores and the vehicles used by the consumers who purchase the CDs. In the same vein, reusing plastic bottles reduces potential carbon dioxide released from producing and distributing new bottles.

Other small changes include carpooling, biking or walking to work, turning off lights and appliances that are not in use and insulating your home to cut down on energy usage.

“We need to teach people. They have the power to reduce the high levels of carbon dioxide in the atmosphere,” Wood said. “The public’s actions will not only save them money but will also help scientists find ways to lower the amount of carbon dioxide in the air.”

U.S. EPA officials agree that the battle for a cleaner atmosphere begins with the individual. According to the organization’s



NO CONTEST — The white plume above is from the Muskingum River coal-fired power plant in Southeastern Ohio. The plant produces four times as much carbon as the surrounding forest can absorb out of the atmosphere every year, according to a study dissertation by Dr. Stephen Watts, Conservation team lead in Environmental Management at Edwards AFB. The study area included 1.8 million acres of forest.

climate change web site, if every household in America replaced conventional light bulbs in five of the most frequently used light fixtures, with bulbs that have the ENERGY STAR® rating, it would prevent greenhouse gases equivalent to emissions from nearly 10 million cars.

“Climate change is a global concern,” Wood said. “Only by working together can we make a difference.”

And countries are showing their cooperation by entering into international agreements to address climate change, like the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change and the Asia Pacific Partnership on Clean Development and Climate.

Some world scientists say there is a direct correlation between carbon dioxide releases and climate change. However, there is no quick fix to reducing the rising amounts of carbon dioxide being

released into the atmosphere.

“Planting more trees to combat the effects of carbon dioxide is only a temporary fix,” Wood said. “Unless we work to reduce the amount of carbon dioxide being released into the atmosphere, then the problems associated with greenhouse gases will continue to grow.”

A 2001 Ph.D. dissertation written by Conservation team lead Dr. Stephen Watts determined forest productivity and carbon dynamics in southeastern Ohio from remotely sensed data. His research showed that trees could not absorb the high levels of carbon dioxide released into the atmosphere by a powerplant.

“We found that in one year, a single coal-burning power plant in southeastern Ohio released four times as much carbon dioxide into the atmosphere as the surrounding 1.8-million-acre forest could absorb,” Watts said.

Another long-term problem with using trees is that carbon dioxide is released into the atmosphere once the tree dies or is burned. Trees absorb carbon dioxide and convert it into biomass. As the biomass decomposes, carbon dioxide gets released into the air.

Scientists and engineers are looking for ways to reduce carbon dioxide emissions. Several designs are in the concept phase, such as underground storage of carbon dioxide produced by power plants and the conversion of carbon dioxide into baking soda. Currently these technologies are too cost-prohibitive to be applied in real-world situations.

“Bottom line, we need to reduce the amount of carbon dioxide we release into the atmosphere,” Watts added.

Since the start of the Industrial Revolution in the last part of the 18th century, America has come a long way in terms of reducing emissions. The Clean Air Act of 1963 led to smog emission standards and a reduction in large industry emissions. The U.S. EPA reports that, since 1970, air toxics from large industrial sources have been reduced by 70 percent and new cars are more than 90 percent cleaner.

However, the continuing climb in atmospheric carbon dioxide paints a different picture. Even though emission standards are better, the rate of carbon dioxide production continues to climb.

“This is why it is so important for individuals to understand how much their energy usage affects the big picture,” Wood said. “If each of us makes small changes in how we choose to use energy, the effect will be magnified tenfold. We may not see the total effect right away but it will make a difference in the long run.”

RTS

Small steps toward a better global climate

Simple things to do to help reduce the amount of carbon dioxide released:

- Carpool
- Change conventional light bulbs in your house or office to ENERGY STAR® rated bulbs
- Reduce, reuse and recycle
- Keep your car in tune and check your tire pressure
- Insulate your home

Climate change web sites

- <http://epa.gov/climatechange/index.html>
- <http://www.climatechange.ca.gov>
- <http://climate.dot.gov>

Knowing your plastics and what to do with them

Ever wonder what those numbers inside the chasing arrows on the bottom of your plastic water bottle actually mean? They could translate into cash.

There are seven different types of plastics; some are commonly recycled while others are not. The most commonly recycled plastics are polyethylene terephthalate (PET), also known as number one plastic and high-density polyethylene (HDPE), otherwise known as number two plastic.

Clear plastic drinking bottles are an example of PET plastics. Milk jugs, bleach bottles and laundry detergent bottles are examples of HDPE.

Finding out the type of plastic is as simple as looking at the bottom of the container.

“The numbers should be located on the container or item,” said Gary Schafer, solid waste and recycling specialist for Environmental Management. “Look for the chasing arrows with a number inside of them.”

Plastics are numbered one through seven inside of the chasing arrows, a concept designed in 1988 for uniformity and ease of recycling.

At Edwards Air Force Base, all seven plastic types are accepted at the recycling center. Base residents have the option of taking their plastics to the base recycling center to receive a California Redemption Value (CRV) refund or they may throw the plastics into their recycle bins to be picked up by base landfill management.

“Those who work on base may bring their plastics to the recycling center to receive a CRV refund or they can take them to their local recycling center,” Schafer added.

While all plastics are recyclable, not all plastics are considered valuable. Off-base recycling may not accept all types of plastic. According to Schafer, most off-base recycling centers are likely to only take number one PET plastics and number two HDPE plastics because they are the most valuable.



PLASTICS — *These are just a few items that contain the plastics 1 to 7 code on them. The 2-liter soda bottle is a number one plastic, as is the water bottle behind the green coffee bin. The water jug is a number two plastic (HDPE), as are both coffee bins.*

Then there are those plastics that are less commonly recycled, such as plastics three, four and five – polyvinyl chloride (PVC), low-density polyethylene (LDPE) and polypropylene (PP). Few recycling centers will accept them due to their low resale value.

The number six plastic can be a useful plastic to recycle. This type of plastic – polystyrene (PS) – includes food service items such as cups, plates, bowls, cutlery, packing “peanuts” and insulation. The reason this plastic is widely accepted is because it can be reprocessed into known items like rigid foam insulation. Food waste must be rinsed from the plastic before recycling.

Finally, there is plastic number seven. This plastic is the most difficult to recycle and because of that, it is seldom taken by recyclers. However, there are recyclers that

specialize in recycling this type of plastic. Examples of number seven plastics, also known as “other,” are three- and five-gallon reusable water bottles, like the kind placed on top of a water cooler.

“Some grocery stores recycle plastic bags and can take them,” said Schafer. “At Edwards, plastic bags and Styrofoam are considered refuse. The market isn’t large enough for these kinds of plastics and it would take a lot of plastic bags or Styrofoam to weigh enough to recycle. Currently these items are not cost effective to recycle.”

For more information on plastics one through seven and how you can recycle them, you may contact Milton Riley at (661) 277-2431 or the Environmental Management office at (661) 277-1401.

Plastics 1-7



Polyethylene terephthalate (PET, PETE) PET is clear, tough, and has good gas and moisture barrier properties. The resin is commonly used in beverage bottles and many injection-molded consumer product containers. Cleaned, recycled PET flakes and pellets are in great demand for spinning fiber for carpet yarns, producing fiberfill and geotextiles. It is sometimes called polyester.



Polypropylene (PP) PP has good chemical resistance, is strong, and has a high melting point making it good for hot-fill liquids. This resin is found in flexible and rigid packaging, fibers, and large molded parts for automotive and consumer products like medicine bottles, bottle caps and closures, containers for take out foods, yogurt, margarine and deli foods.



High-density polyethylene (HDPE) HDPE is used to make many types of bottles. Unpigmented bottles are translucent, have good barrier properties and stiffness, and are well suited to packaging products with a short shelf life like milk. Because HDPE has good chemical resistance, it is used for packaging many household and industrial chemicals like detergents and bleach.



Polystyrene (PS) PS is a versatile plastic that can be rigid or foamed. General purpose polystyrene is clear, hard and brittle. It has a relatively low melting point. Typical applications include protective packaging, foodservice packaging, bottles and food containers.



Polyvinyl chloride (PVC, Vinyl) In addition to its stable physical properties, PVC has good chemical resistance, weatherability, flow characteristics and stable electrical properties. The diverse slate of vinyl products can be broadly divided into rigid and flexible materials. In addition to packaging, PVC's major uses are rigid applications like pipe, siding, window frames, fencing, decking and railing. Flexible applications include medical products like blood bags and medical tubing, wire and cable insulation, carpet backing, and flooring.



OTHER Use of this code indicates that a package is made with a resin other than the six listed, or is made of more than one resin used in a multilayer combination. Three- and five-gallon reusable water bottles, some citrus juice bottles, and custom packaging are types of other plastics.



Low-density polyethylene (LDPE) LDPE is predominantly used in film applications because of its toughness, flexibility and relative transparency, making it popular for use in applications where heat sealing is necessary. LDPE is also used to manufacture some flexible lids and bottles, like mustard bottles, as well as in wire and cable applications.

Written information provided by the American Chemistry Council

How long does it take for plastic to break down?

According to the Clean Up Australia web site:

- **Plastic-coated paper: 5 years**
- **Plastic bags: 20 to 1,000 years**
- **Plastic film containers: 20 to 30 years**
- **Plastic bottles: Indefinitely**

Where to Find More INFORMATION



Published data and documents relating to Environmental Management are available for public review in information repositories at three locations. The current information repositories are located in the cities of Lancaster and Rosamond, as well as Edwards AFB. They are updated when new documents are released.

For questions about information in the repositories, you may contact Gary Hatch, Environmental Public Affairs at (661) 277-1454 or by e-mail at 95abw.pae@edwards.af.mil. Here is a list of our current information repositories:

Edwards AFB Library

5 W. Yeager Blvd.
Building 2665
Edwards AFB, Calif.
(661) 275-2665
Hours of operation: Mon-Thu 9:30 a.m. – 7 p.m.
Fri 9:30 a.m. – 6 p.m.
Sat-Sun 10:30 a.m. – 6 p.m.

Kern County Public Library

Wanda Kirk Branch
3611 Rosamond Blvd.
Rosamond, Calif.
(661) 256-3236
Hours of operation: Tue-Wed 12 p.m. – 8 p.m.
Thu-Sat 10 a.m. – 6 p.m.

Los Angeles County Public Library

601 W. Lancaster Blvd.
Lancaster, Calif.
(661) 948-5029
Hours of operation: Mon-Wed 10 a.m. – 8 p.m.
Thu-Fri 10 a.m. – 5 p.m.
Sat 11 a.m. – 5 p.m.

Report to STAKEHOLDERS SUBSCRIPTIONS

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Restoration Advisory Board (RAB) Information

The RAB is made up of elected representatives from communities in and around Edwards AFB, regulators from federal and state agencies, and base officials. The board's purpose is to provide a forum for two-way communication among base restoration officials, regulators and representatives regarding the cleanup of contamination from past military activities.

The board meets quarterly, rotating meeting locations in communities surrounding the base. The public is welcome to attend. If you have any questions or concerns about the cleanup activities going on at Edwards AFB,

you may contact your community's RAB member or Mr. Gary Hatch, Environmental Public Affairs, at (661) 277-1454.

Next Quarterly Meeting

Date: Feb. 21, 2008

Time: 5:30 p.m.

Location: Mojave Veterans Building
15580 "O" Street
Mojave, Calif.

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