

# Big influx at China Lake

## NAWCWD to draw record number of international visitors in 2015-16

NAVAL AIR WEAPONS STATION CHINA LAKE, Calif. - Naval Air Warfare Center Weapons Division is expecting a larger than usual influx of international partners to conduct work at both its China Lake and Point Mugu sites throughout 2015 and 2016.

China Lake should see about 650 visitors this year with more than 400 arriving between now and March. Nearly 400 are scheduled for work in 2016 with the majority again arriving in the first quarter of the calendar year.

"These numbers are estimates and could change but the impact is immediate," said NAWCWD Executive Director Scott O'Neil. "We want our workforce to be aware that there will be increased infrastructure demand in our facilities, and we want the community to be prepared for increased traffic not only on the roads but also in the local businesses."

One city official said she was glad to hear of the increase in visitors to China Lake.

"This is wonderful news for us," said Ridgecrest mayor Peggy Breeden. "We couldn't be happier because not only is it great for the Navy mission in the Indian Wells Valley but it also means more sources of revenue for our local hotels, restaurants and businesses. We do recognize their value to us and look forward to the increase in work on the base as well as the increase in cash flow in our community."



US. NAVY PHOTO

**NAWCWD is expecting about 650 international partners to come to China Lake this year to conduct a variety of defense-related work including test and evaluation, and collaborative research.**

Point Mugu will see almost 700 international partners visiting throughout the next two years. Most of the visits at both sites are expected to be short-term, between a few weeks and a few months.

"This number of visitors is larger than typical," said Kelly McDonald, head of the NAWCWD International Programs

Office. "We're not surprised because we've seen an increase in foreign activity within the Department of Defense so we should expect our work with international partners to also grow."

They are coming to NAWCWD to conduct a variety of defense-related work including test and evaluation, and col-

laborative research.

"The international community recognizes the Weapons Division and its unique labs, facilities and capabilities as the Navy's premiere location for research, development, acquisition, and test and evaluation," McDonald said. "I think we are pretty well known for our professional and efficient execution of international work."

NAWCWD stands to benefit by collaborating with coalition partners.

"We expect to advance some of our own science and technology as well as work on interoperability issues," McDonald said. "We want them to be as successful as possible because that helps us to also be successful on the battlefield."

It is expected that there may be an even larger footprint in the community because some of these folks will likely bring other family members with them. Because of this increase in visitors, the workforce and the community should allow for more processing time at the pass office as well as other retail and service-related activities. The command would also like to remind everyone to follow already established security policies and procedures concerning foreign nationals.

"We are excited about this increase in work and expect only good and lasting results from engaging with our international partners," O'Neil said.



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# China Lake upgrading its aging infrastructure

By **AARON CRUTCHFIELD**

MANAGING EDITOR

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One of the biggest challenges to keeping the mission of China Lake moving forward is the age of the infrastructure.

That was part of the message delivered by Capt. Rich Wiley, commanding officer at Naval Air Weapons Station, China Lake, at the Indian Wells Valley Economic Outlook Conference Thursday.

Wiley has said since he began at the base a year ago that his top priority is the safety and security of those on board the base, and he reiterated that Thursday.

"I will never relax on it," Wiley said. "So please excuse me if you see a fence-line, or a lineup outside the base of cars. Next is going to be infrastructure. When was the base made? The 1940s and 1950s."

Much of the infrastructure on the base dates back to that time frame, including water mains and electrical distribution. There are 785 miles of power lines on the base for distribution, and when added with transformers and other things, the mileage goes past 1,000. There are 205 miles of distribution lines for potable water.

That leaves a lot to maintain.

The water lines rupture dozens of times per year. Wiley told of one break on a Sunday that happened in a remote part of the base, but didn't cause a drop in water pressure. By the time the break was found and shut off, about 2 million gallons were lost. The fire portions of

the water system are also aged.

For the electrical wiring, much of the distribution system uses wooden poles because metal can interfere with tests. Many of these poles were installed in the 1940s into highly alkaline soils, making poles prone to failure. Wiley said base officials are constantly driving around looking for problems so that people coming onto base don't have to endure water, sewer or electrical outages.

"We're talking about eating an elephant here," Wiley said. "How do you do it? One bite at a time."

"Addressing the basics and making sure these are shored up so you don't have to worry about it, we want to make sure we do. That's paramount to what we do daily."

Another of Wiley's priorities is the base's water footprint.

"We've reduced our water footprint by 54 percent," he said. "In 2014, we reduced it an extra 8 or 9 percent. That's huge."

He said that the base won't be getting to 100 percent conservation. "However, we can get better. I can get better. There are ways. I told you about the nearly 2 million gallons. In the last three months, I've directed my public works department, every loss of water, every break of a line we have, I'm going to calculate it, I'm going to date it, and I want to know the amount we lost. Reason being, I have to report it to my boss."

In addition to fixing the infrastructure to avoid wasting water, he also said he's working on improving conservation. For



AARON CRUTCHFIELD/DAILY INDEPENDENT

**Capt. Rich Wiley speaks at Thursday's conference.**

example, he went to lunch at a restaurant off base, and the restaurant has a postcard with water-saving tips. He applied that to the base for things like not watering grass during the hot parts of the day, when the water evaporates, and also only needing to water for five minutes, which gets the water down three or four inches into the ground, deep enough for grass roots.

In addition to improved infrastructure and the safety and security, the base will grow a bit under Wiley's watch, with 10,000 acres of the Cuddeback Land Range being added in the southwest portion of the south range.

So why the addition when the base

already covers 1.1 million acres?

"You can never have enough," Wiley said. "That doesn't mean we're actively seeking it, but when you're looking at JSF, when you're looking at unmanned vehicles, in addition with the other testing that's going on out there, we need to separate those. The portion of Cuddeback we're talking about, the southwest portion of the south range, will be for that. The maturing of UAVs. Not only the air overhead, but the land underneath."

The transition should be complete sometime this year; planning has been going on for a few months now, and once the transfer is done, it will take a few months to get it ready for use.



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## 'This is not KGB Russia'

### Special meeting on land-use plan sparks public debate

By JESSICA WESTON  
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A special meeting of the Ridgecrest City Council on Saturday sparked lively public comments as well as some debate. The topic was the Indian Wells Valley Land Use Management Plan. Council held the meeting specifically to allow the public to weigh in on — and weigh in they did.

Roughly a dozen members of the public spoke up, mostly questioning or criticizing some aspect of the proposed plan. Those critical of the plan drew applause from the small crowd, but the one speaker, Jim Fallgatter, who spoke up in support did not.

Robert Eierman said that he thought the crisis was being exaggerated and that the current plan is too punitive on certain property owners.

"Suddenly we find ourselves today in what a lot of people are considering a crisis. You read articles in the newspaper, you have people thinking that any day now, they're going to turn on their tap and they're not going to have water. It has gotten so bad because nobody in positions of authority have quelled those beliefs. Instead what the county is doing is fostering those beliefs," he said.

"Why is this suddenly a crisis?"  
"Ag has reduced and yet we're blaming for all the problems. And we're saying,

'My gosh, there's a crisis.' There is no crisis," he said.

"Do we have to do something for the future? Of course, but this EIR and this land management use plan is absolutely the wrong approach to take."

Eierman said that the EIR and LMP cripple the small agriculture people and do not do anything to stop the large commercial agriculture that is currently here.

Eierman also objected to the plan on constitutional grounds, causing some in the crowd to yell "Amen!" and applaud.

"Here, what you are asked to approve, is something that violates constitutional rights and you can't do that.

"You all took an oath of office and swore that you would do that. And you swore that you would bear true faith and allegiance, which means that when you see government attempting to do something which is unconstitutional, you must stand up.

"That's the only choice, the four of you, the five of you, have is to make sure that things like this don't happen in this country. This is not KGB Russia and it's not Nazi Germany! Those are the kind of places that do this kind of thing. We don't do this in this country."

Jim Fallgatter was the lone voice explicitly supporting the plan.

"I'm a resident of Ridgecrest. I'm a homeowner. I'm a commercial property owner, undeveloped commercial property. I'm a multi-family property owner, un-



Robert Eierman speaks out against the IWV Land Use Management Plan at a special meeting held by the Ridgecrest City Council March 14.

JESSICA WESTON/DAILY INDEPENDENT

developed yet in the city of Ridgecrest. I own parcels out in the county, a number of them, and I represent family members that own parcels out in the county that are going to be impacted by this EIR.

"I am in total agreement with this EIR. It's highly necessary. My family stands to lose value on our property out there, but that's the way it is."

Fallgatter said that "the whole western U.S. is in a water crisis" and there is no point in debating that.

Fallgatter said he agreed with earlier points about small property owners but "I am totally against the blatant excessive continuing overdraft and expansion of large scale agriculture in this valley. Totally against it," he said.

"Large ag is sucking way more than its share of water so that has to be halted. I

would go so far as to say the county, our supervisors, are not taking all the steps that they should take at this point.

"They've started building a bridge to help this problem, but they've only built it half-way. Part of the problem here is we have a little bit of a reality gap going on, between what is the future of Ridgecrest and what is it dependent upon?"

"And that is what we are coming to speak to you about, is you are the Ridgecrest City Council and we are in partnership every way we can with the Navy base. The Navy base is our crop. National defense. The war on terror. Pistachios is not the crop in the Indian Wells Valley. Alfalfa is not the crop in the Indian Wells Valley, it never has been."

For the full story, see the March 17, 2015, issue.

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*Peggy Breeden  
Mayor of Ridgecrest*





# Crash on Highway 395 kills three

By AARON CRUTCHFIELD

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A violent head-on collision on Highway 395 near Searles Station Road killed three people early Wednesday, April 8, and injured two more.

The crash involved two cars, a 2006 Chevrolet Aveo with four people inside and a 2002 Volkswagen Golf with a single occupant.

Killed in the crash were Myranda Danea Kiaha, 18, of Ridgecrest, the Aveo's driver; Taylor Kay-Marie Warren, 19, of Ridgecrest, a passenger in the Aveo; and Erica Greif, 23, of Reno, the Volkswagen's driver.

Two survivors from the back seat of the Aveo were taken to hospitals, one by ambulance and one airlifted.

The initial call came in at 12:19 a.m. for a crash with a rollover and possibly involving a semi. The Aveo landed on its roof, and a semi was not involved, but swerved to avoid the accident scene and went off the side of the road. The driver declined medical aid at the scene.

According to a report from the California Highway Patrol, the Volkswagen was headed southbound and the Aveo was headed northbound, both at unknown rates of speed, when they struck each other head-on. The cause of the crash was under investigation.

Highway 395 was closed until nearly 4 a.m. Wednesday. Although both involved vehicles landed off the roadway, both lanes were covered with oil and



AARON CRUTCHFIELD/DAILY INDEPENDENT

**Kern County fire Department personnel work at the scene of a two-car crash early Wednesday that killed three people.**

car parts, including pieces of an engine block. Traffic was stopped a way back in each direction to allow rescue personnel room to work, and the lines backed up despite the light traffic at the early morn-

ing hour.

The family of one of the crash survivors, 14-year-old Trinity Horner, has set up a fundraiser page on GoFundMe to help with medical expenses. According to the

page, Horner suffered multiple skull and vertebrae fractures, though her spinal cord is intact and she is able to talk. The page is at [www.gofundme.com/trinityandfamily](http://www.gofundme.com/trinityandfamily).

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# Land-use plan passes 5-0

By JESSICA WESTON

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The Indian Wells Valley Land Use Management Plan was passed unanimously by the Kern County Board of Supervisors at their meeting Tuesday.

The IWVLMP project, in part, is intended to help rebalance water usage in the valley. The plan itself was controversial and went through a lengthy and occasionally contentious public vetting process lasting several months.

The decision came around 4.75 hours into the meeting, after roughly an hour each of testimony from those supporting and opposing the plan.

Ridgecrest figured heavily in Tuesday's meeting. Seven people testified via remote from the County Building on China Lake Boulevard. Of those, nearly all supported the plan.

In Bakersfield, a total of roughly 22 testified, many of them from Ridgecrest. Those testifying were split roughly equally between supporting and opposing the plan.

In Ridgecrest, Jim Gregory spoke up. "Ideally in a democracy like we have, dialog would help us find the common ground and would end up in resulting in more thoughtful decisions. Unfortunately, this has not happened in this case. Instead of finding common ground we have become polarized. It's not that we haven't had data. There are thousands of pages of geological studies that indicate an overdraft ... of our local groundwater.

He mentioned the local water district's

program offering dollars for grass. "So it appears we already are restricting ag, it's just the residential ag."

"My view is that we have plenty of science to support the decision to curb further expansion of agriculture in the desert.

"I think it's human to have bias. And perhaps also human to select data that supports your bias. But I'm afraid those who say we have lots of water may have a stronger bias than most."

Ridgecrest Mayor Peggy Breeden, speaking for herself, also spoke out. The land use plan sets no precedent, she said, adding that the IWV water issues are unique to the area. Because economic development is of key importance and "because development is almost totally dependent on being able to point to solutions being sought and found" and "because we all matter," Breeden asked the Board to vote for the plan.

Indian Wells Valley Water District General Manager Don Zdeba, Renee Westa-Lusk, City Planner Matthew Alexander and Planning Commissioner Solomon Rajaratnam all spoke out in favor of the plan via live remote. Most or all of the office holders emphasized that they were speaking for themselves, not their office.

The sole dissenting voice was Robert Eierman. Eierman said that he supports six of the seven parts of the plan, but opposes rezoning private property.

Extensive public testimony was also heard in Bakersfield. Roughly 11 people spoke out against the plan. Elaine Mead, Chuck Griffin, Rita Read, Carol Vaughn, Al Huey, Mike Neel, Pat Farris and Mar-



JESSICA WESTON/DAILY INDEPENDENT

**A group of concerned citizens, including Indian Wells Valley Water District General Manager Don Zdeba and Ridgecrest Mayor Peggy Breeden, watch as Kern County Planning Director Lorelei Oviatt discusses the Indian Wells Valley Land-use Management Plan with the Board of Supervisors.**

ilyn Neel from this area were among them. Stan Rajtora also spoke out on the Airport Land Use Compatibility Plan aspect of the plan, saying that he is not against noise contours but they need to be based on sound scientific studies and protect the public.

Common themes emerged among most who spoke out in opposition. They suggested waiting for the Groundwater Sustainability Agency and Groundwater Sustainability Plan and possibly the governor's recent ordinances to tackle the problem.

Many also spoke out in favor of some sort of urgency ordinance or ordinances as a possible alternate to the IWVLMP.

Roughly 11 people also spoke out in favor of the plan. The local contingent included Lyle Fisher, Peter Brown, Don Cortichiato, Leroy Corlett, Jack Connell, Kathy Vejtasa, Judy Decker, Chris Ellis, and Commander Brian Longbottom. Tom Fallgatter and John Fallgatter, brothers of Jim Fallgatter, also spoke.

**For the full story, see the May 20, 2015, issue.**



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## Goodbye, Goodwill

### Ridgecrest store closes June 26

By JESSICA WESTON  
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The Goodwill store in Ridgecrest closed its doors to the public Friday, June 26, 2015. The decision may seem abrupt, but was apparently some time in the making.

"It's a difficult decision because we love Ridgecrest," Sheryl Chalupa, President and CEO of Goodwill Industries of South Central California, said Friday. "It's heart-breaking."

Chalupa said finances are at the heart of the decision. "Our lease expires this summer and as the board has been studying the options over the last year or so," she said, "we would have had to renegotiate the lease. That's what sparked the conversation and the analysis."

Of concern was the "looming increase in the cost of doing business" and the fact that "six of the last seven years have not been profitable," she said.

"We are not seeing enough growth in the community," Chalupa said. "[The store] has lost money for years. The Bakersfield stores have been able to subsidize in product and covering the financial loss, but now it's becoming a drain."

Out of 13 stores, the one in Ridgecrest was number 12, said Chief Operating Officer Jake Slayton, "and the thirteenth store is a specialty store."

"It was just not able to turn the corner revenue-wise to offset all the costs."



JESSICA WESTON/DAILY INDEPENDENT

**The Ridgecrest Goodwill store closed its doors to the public on June 26, 2015. The news came as a surprise to many in the community, including 11 employees who were notified of the decision Friday morning.**

The remote location of Ridgecrest added to the cost. Donations to fill the store were shipped in at additional cost. "Ridgecrest donations not enough to keep the store full," he said.

The news came as a surprise to the store's 11 full-time employees, who were notified of the store closure Friday. "People here just found out today," Chalupa said. "Depending on length of service we did provide a small severance package." In

addition, she said, the company is providing other supports and services, including assistance with EDD, filing for unemployment and resume development and interview prep skills.

Slayton said he met with the employees Friday morning and offered severance and placement services. "Any time you have a store close, it's never a positive thing," he said. "Overall they took it well. I'd say there was some initial shock, but

everyone was very nice and cordial."

Goodwill may be known for their thrift stores, but since 1902 their primary focus has been employment, Chalupa said, particularly for "people with low skills or lack of training or some other barriers."

"Goodwill's whole mission is all around helping people get and keep employment," primarily through thrift stores. "The thrift store is the engine around which we do that."

Processing goods from the store such as cash registers and other equipment will go to Bakersfield and goods donated locally will go to DART. (Other donated goods are going back to Bakersfield because of an arrangement with the donor.)

On the plus side for locals, Chalupa said there is "a lot of competition for donated goods" in the area.

"[Closing] was a hard decision for us, but we feel the community is in very good shape in terms of the availability of thrift store shopping and donating services."

She said the store is recommending that people make local donations to DART, WACOM or the Salvation Army.

"I strongly recommend to people to support the other three thrifts. We have complementary missions," she said. "My biggest hope is the community rallies around the other three."

Goodwill will be working with the State Department of Rehabilitation to provide placement services. Call Goodwill's Administrative offices at 661-837-0595 for more information.

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## ‘We screwed up’

### County willing to make up for lack of oversight with dog park relocation

By JESSICA WESTON

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Lack of oversight by Kern County caused the mixup that allowed Eagle Scout Michael Hannafin to put a dog park on county land already leased to the China Lake Museum Foundation, but the county plans to make things right.

That was the word from Supervisor Mick Gleason and Kern County Parks and Recreation Director Bob Larude.

“We screwed up, and we’re going to fix it,” Gleason said Tuesday. He said that the county inadvertently allowed Hannafin to put in a dog park on land in Leroy Jackson Park that was already leased by the foundation.

According to an agreement dated May 7, 2013 obtained by the Daily Independent, the China Lake Museum Foundation is leasing from Kern County an approximately 5.10-acre portion of APN 396-011-11 in “Kern Desert Regional Park” for \$450 a year for 30 years, with the possibility of extending the lease another 10 years. Base rent can be raised by the county after five years. The agreement also states that the property will be used for a museum.

“They [the China Lake Museum Foundation] have an agreement through the county through our Property Management Division of General Services that was put in place within the last year or two,” Larude said Wednesday.

Larude said that land covered by the agreement “intersects with where the dog park is.

“The dog park was put over some of the China Lake Museum’s leased property.

“As I’ve said from the beginning, and the China Lake [Museum] folks have been told this numerous



SUBMITTED PHOTO

**The above map shows the different owners and tenants of land along French Avenue. The China Lake Museum legally leases some of the land where the new dog park is located from the county.**

times . . . when they’re ready to go, if there’s still a conflict we would move the dog park.”

He added that the museum group is not yet at the point of building and still need a permit among other requirements.

Larude said the property in question has irregular boundaries. “If you look at it, you’ve got some really weird lines of existing lease property of the China Lake Museum.”

He said the original error occurred when the county failed to run down exactly where the property line boundary is.

“We knew they had the leased area, the problem was there wasn’t something that showed the defined

limits,” he said. “Shame on us for not checking and that’s the mistake we said we made. And we’ve taken responsibility for that.

“We admitted to it and said we’ll move the dog park when we need to.”

Larude seconded Denny Kline’s previous assertion that the dog park won’t be going far. “When we move the dog park. It will still be within Leroy Jackson Park.”

“I don’t know why it [the error] is being deemed an assessment error,” Kern County Assistant Assessor Lee Smith said Tuesday. “I’m uncomfortable with this being portrayed that way.”

Larude clarified that the Kern County Assessor Recorder’s office did not have anything to do with the error. “Not at all,” he said.

Meanwhile community support has been building for keeping the dog park in the same place, with possible petitions being mentioned on Facebook.

Michael Hannafin and his mother Cheryl, who was his key supporter in the enterprise, say the response is flattering but will not accomplish anything.

Cheryl Hannafin said Monday that while the public desire for petition shows support for Michael, it would not do any good. The land is the county’s and “a petition doesn’t change that.

“I wish I could comfort people and let people know sometimes things happen,” she said. For Michael, she added, “the experience is immeasurable anyway.”

“I appreciate that people care about it,” Michael Hannafin said Monday. “I would probably just tell them that I do appreciate it, but in the grand scheme of things it [a petition] won’t do anything. It’s not that kind of an issue.”

“We’re still going to have that dog park, it might be in different location,” Cheryl Hannafin said. “We will support the county whatever we have to do.”

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# THE SEARCH IS OVER

# Ashley's death ends 18-day crime spree

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Benjamin Peter Ashley, 34, was killed by multiple gunshots from sheriff's deputies after he failed to comply with orders to drop his weapon as he walked toward foothills northwest of Invokern Aug. 15.

Ashley had been wanted on charges of murder, kidnapping, and attempted murder of a peace officer after a crime spree stretching back to July 28 in the mountains between Bakersfield and Inyokern. A press release sent out by the Kern County Sheriff's Department Monday confirmed that the Ashley's cause of death was multiple gunshot wounds and manner of death was homicide, ruling out the possibility that he had turned the handgun on himself.

Four weapons, including a pair of .44-caliber handguns, were found on Ashley's person and in a backpack he was carrying.

a KCSD spokesman said.

"The guns found on Ashley were taken from the cabin where the murder occurred and from the mobile home where he engaged SWAT deputies in a shootout," Kern County Sheriff's Department Public Information Officer Ray Pruitt said Monday.

Youngblood said KCSD got a tip at around 4:50 p.m. regarding the suspect. "We started working the area behind the store."

Deputies came upon the suspect on a dirt road about a mile and a half behind the store. He brandished a firearm, said Youngblood. Deputies fired on the man, killing him.

Pruitt said Ashley most likely walked to the area of Brady's Mini Mart, probably via the Pacific Crest Trail. Brady's is located just north of the intersection of highways 395 and 14, more than 30 miles on foot from Onyx in the eastern Kern River Valley. Sheriff's deputies had searched Onyx for much of late Friday after several people reported seeing Ashley in that area.

Gary Welfl was working at Brady's Mini Mart when Ashley entered the store on Saturday. Welfl said he recognized the suspect from pictures in the media. He said the suspect was wearing a blue shirt, khaki pants, and a cap with his hair tucked up under it. He was carrying four duffel bags and bought a large amount of food, including milk and Doritos.

Welfl said he made small talk with the suspect to relax him but when the suspect's back was turned, he texted his sister, Michelle Dyer, to call 911. The suspect had left the store by the time the Sheriff's Deputies arrived.

Fingerprints were used to positively identify the man as Ashley on Sunday.

The saga began when a suspect kidnapped three young men, who later escaped, in a remote cabin in the Twin Oaks area July 28. After a retired dentist was found murdered in Jawbone Canyon July 30, SWAT team members searched for the suspect got into a shootout with him. Deputy Michael Booker was shot and airlifted to Antelope Valley hospital. Young-

blood said Saturday that Booker was doing well. Another deputy was also wounded in the incident.

Youngblood said DNA, fingerprints and testimony from witnesses were used to connect the incidents.

"It's been a long two weeks. It's been an expensive two weeks for the county. We've had probably 20 different partners that have engaged with us," he said.

Youngblood said law enforcement's strategy to force Ashley out of hiding worked.

"We couldn't find him because there's so many places to hide, but we knew if we kept that pressure ultimately up he would try to escape our perimeter and that's exactly what he did."

Asked if he was surprised to find the suspect so far from Jawbone Canyon, Youngblood replied, "after he evaded us for so long, nothing surprised me."

He continued, "When you're afraid and you're running you can cover a lot of ground, so it did not surprise me to find him here. It surprised me that he was able to elude us for two weeks."

## August 15

Benjamin Peter Ashley takes three young men hostage at a cabin near Twin Oaks. One of the young men owns the cabin. After being held at gunpoint, the young men escape, and Ashley leaves in an all-terrain vehicle stolen from the men. The ATV is found the following morning two miles away from the cabin, but deputies were unable to find the suspect.

Retired dentist David Markiewitz is found shot to death in a cabin in western Jawbone Canyon, about 10 miles from the cabin where the kidnapping occurred.

Ashley engages in a shootout with KCSD SWAT team deputies in a mobile home in the Kelso Valley area. One deputy, Michael Booker, is airlifted to Antelope Valley Hospital with serious wounds, but is recovering well. Ashley escapes

The search continues in the Kelso Valley area and expands to Onyx. A portion of the Pacific Crest Trail is closed, as are three schools in the area. Ashley is said to have broken into several rural cabins, taking food and water to survive. KCSD gets help from the Los Angeles County Sheriff, Ridgecrest PD, Bak-ersfield PD, the US Marshals, and others.

Ashley walks into Brady's Mini Mart and buys a large amount of food. The store's manager texts his sister from behind the counter to call 911. Deputies arrive later and find Ashley on a dirt road behind the store; they fire on Ashley, striking him fatally. Guns from the site of the kidnapping and the site of the murder are found in Ashley's possession.



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Kevin McCarthy**



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# Gleason tackles county issues, water

## Gleason explains why IWV critical, what it means at Chamber luncheon

**By Aaron Crutchfield**

MANAGING EDITOR

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County Supervisor Mick Gleason took time to explain why the Indian Wells Valley water basin was moved to critical overdraft status and what it means to the community at a Ridgecrest Chamber of Commerce luncheon this week.

"Our water table is in decline," Gleason said. "The Kern County Water Agency has said that 85 to 90 percent of the wells they study and they measure are in chronic decline and have been for 60 years. That fact alone means we have to do something to correct our situation."

Up until a few weeks ago, the IWV was considered a medium priority basin, but under the Sustainable Groundwater Management Act, the State Water Board changed the classification.

So why did it get changed and why now? Donna Hocker, president of the Ridgecrest Area Association of Realtors, asked Gleason what changed since May, when RAAR representatives met with State Sen. Jean Fuller, who at the time said the IWV was medium priority and was more concerned about Tulare County.

Gleason said the IWV was designated as medium priority back in 1980, and then in 2003, the designations were reviewed but the basins weren't moved around.

"In 2003, there was no determination, there was just a review of the standard, so that for whatever reason was moved along," Gleason said. "Then as a result of SGMA, one of the first things SGMA says in the law is it authorizes DWR to review all basins and see which ones are critically overdrafted. We fit the definition that they used. I think there were nine basins that were added, so now there's a total of 21 basins."

Other than the bad connotation of the word "critical," Gleason made it sound like the new designation will have little bad effect, and may actually be a positive.

"What this means is our timelines have changed," Gleason said. "Because we're a critically overdrafted basin, and we're a critically overdrafted basin because our water table is in decline — that's the simple fact — because we're critically overdrafted, we have to have a GSA in place by June 30, 2017. The other thing is that we have to have a GSP, a plan, by 2020."

A groundwater sustainability agency would still have had to be formed under the old designation, just a bit later. The GSA will then come up with the groundwater sustainability plan.

But there's also a benefit to the designation.

"Also, funding has changed. There's a \$10 million carveout that was taken out of Proposition 1, that was a state water bond that was passed a couple of



AARON CRUTCHFIELD/DAILY INDEPENDENT

**County Supervisor Mick Gleason addresses the Ridgecrest Chamber of Commerce earlier this week.**

years ago, that's going to be directed strictly to critically overdrafted basins," Gleason said. "We're one of them."

There is still the question of who will be the GSA to be worked out. The Board of Supervisors will discuss whether the Board could be it on Sept. 15 in closed session. It could be another agency — must be a land-use or water-use decision-making agency, and Gleason said there are nine in the IWV including the Navy, Ridgecrest, Bureau of Land

Management, the three counties, the two water districts and the Native American tribes.

But whoever it is, the hope is to have it in place by the end of this year, well ahead of the 2017 deadline, which could then get working.

Once it does, one issue it will have to tackle is just how much water use is sustainable.

**For the full story, see the Sept. 10 issue.**



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## Corey takes over for Moran

### NAWCWD holds change of command ceremony

**By Aaron Crutchfield**  
MANAGING EDITOR  
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There's a new admiral at the Weapons Division. In a ceremony the morning of Oct. 29 in front of the China Lake administration building, Rear Adm. Mike Moran was relieved by Rear Adm. Brian Corey as the commander of Naval Air Warfare Center Weapons Division. The ceremony included remarks by Moran; NAWCWD Executive Director Scott O'Neil; Vice Adm. Paul Grosklags, Commander, Naval Air Systems Command; and Corey.

"The last two years have been really special to me, working with you," Moran said during his remarks. "I've learned far more from you all than you'll ever learn from me. I'm a better acquisition professional, I'm a better officer and I'm a better person for being here, and it's all due to you. And I mean that."

Moran went on to name individual people and groups who had helped him along the way in his time at NAWCWD, as well as the community at large.

"I can't thank you in the community enough for what you've done to welcome us and makes us part of this fabulous, fabulous organization that is China Lake and Ridgecrest," he said.

He also shared a positive outlook for the future of the Weapons Division.

"I think the pendulum is swinging, and leadership recognizing the value that the warfare centers and our technical workforce play in the needs of our Navy and our Defense Department," Moran said.

After officially taking over command, Corey gave some remarks, also with a positive look on where NAWCWD is headed.

"Now if you read defense industry news or some of



**Rear Adm. Mike Moran (left) shakes the hand of Rear Adm. Brian Corey immediately after command of Naval Air Warfare Center Weapons Division was transferred from Moran to Corey during a ceremony Thursday.**

AARON CRUTCHFIELD/DAILY INDEPENDENT

the media back east, they'll talk to you about all the things that are wrong with what's going on in the military," Corey said. "The rising threat is real; they talk about that, but they talk about it as though we can't do anything about it. I agree with the three previous speakers — we do have our challenges and we have to change. But the young folks I met here,

the experience I see here in this audience and around the base, I am absolutely confident that we are going to find a way, a new way, to deliver the fleet capability that we need, and the future is indeed bright. So I couldn't be happier to join you as our commander."

Moran is now headed to Patuxent River, Maryland, as the program executive officer for tactical aircraft.



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# Record-setting fiscal year for NAWCWD

By RENEE HATCHER  
NAWCWD  
PUBLIC AFFAIRS

The Naval Air Warfare Center Weapons Division logged record-setting numbers with notable increases in hiring and work during its last fiscal year.

The command saw a 10 percent increase in new orders that resulted in \$1.4 billion worth of work accomplished between October 2014 and September 2015. NAWCWD hired about 700 new people; more than 200 of those were new professionals including Engineer and Scientist Development Program participants, and interns. Taking attrition into account, there was a net growth of more than 400 employees.

"We landed some great new projects like Synthetic Guidance Tomahawk and MQ-8C, and our traditional work grew significantly," said NAWCWD Executive Director Scott O'Neil. "Our relationship with senior naval leadership also improved significantly as did their understanding of us and our capabilities."

NAWCWD hosted several high-level leaders including Under Secretary of Defense for Acquisition, Technology and Logistics Frank Kendall in May 2014, Assistant Secretary of the Navy for Research, Development and Acquisition Sean Stackley in August 2014, and more recently Vice Adm. Mike Shoemaker, the commander of Naval Air Forces.

Stackley described his day at China Lake like walking around in a candy store.

"I saw a lot leading edge work, and outside-the-box thinking," he said. "We need more of that."

Recently sworn in Chief of Naval Operations Adm. John Richardson indicated that he wants to strengthen innovation within the Navy by building innovation cells to incubate new ideas.

"That's NAWCWD's sweet spot," O'Neil said. "We have truly stepped out of the pack and set a critical



U.S. NAVY PHOTO BY MARK PAHUTA  
**Dr. Andrew Ihnen, left, a material scientist at Naval Air Warfare Center Weapons Division, explains the capabilities of NAWCWD's Energetics Ink and Additive Energetics Lab to Frank Kendall, right, Under Secretary of Defense for Acquisition, Technology and Logistics, during a tour at China Lake in May 2014.**

and timely example of the value of strong, innovative technical capabilities for the Navy."

Adm. Scott Swift, commander of the U.S. Pacific Fleet, was another senior Navy leader who recently visited the command. After his tour in September he said, "NAWCWD is the Navy's innovation cell and has been for over 70 years."

NAWCWD leadership said the command remains focused on delivering quality products and services, and routinely surveys its customers to get feedback.

"Our surveys indicate we have happy customers with all categories improving their marks," O'Neil said. "Life at NAWCWD is very good."

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## O'Neil looks back on a long, successful career

By **AARON CRUTCHFIELD**

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As he prepares to retire from his post as executive director of the Naval Air Warfare Center Weapons Division, Scott O'Neil can look back at his nearly-43-year-career with satisfaction.

He came to China Lake in 1972 and got to start off with his first love, which was building rockets, and then after moving through the ranks, he's moved NAWCWD through the changes from BRAC 2005 into the unit it is today, which he said likely has its strongest military value since the Vietnam era.

"I'm pretty happy with where we're at and what we've achieved in the last decade," O'Neil said. "As I get ready to exit the door, I look back at my tenure here and I think we've improved NAWCWD as a whole significantly in the last decade, from a business perspective, from a workforce perspective, from an infrastructure perspective, from a work makeup perspective. I think we're pretty healthy, and I think we're postured well for the future."

He has been executive director for the past decade, taking over on an acting basis in June 2005 and being selected for the position on a permanent basis in May 2006. That means he took over right as major changes started taking place with the 2005 Base Realignment and Closure program, which brought many jobs and programs to China Lake, particularly from the sister facility at



AARON CRUTCHFIELD/DAILY INDEPENDENT

**Scott O'Neil is retiring as the executive director of NAWCWD in early January.**

Point Mugu. O'Neil said it was tough going for a while.

"The biggest challenge [in the last decade] was the BRAC 2005," he said. "It was very divisive for NAWCWD. The BRAC dictated a lot of the moves of the weapons work to the China Lake side. In the long run, it was a good move for the Navy at large, but in the short run, it created a lot of mistrust and negative feelings between our two campuses."

Although BRAC was the greatest challenge, it also led to what he views as one of his main successes during his tenure.

"I think we've done a good job in the post-BRAC 2005 realm of rebuilding the trust amongst our team across NAWCWD, and stabilizing the work at the

Point Mugu site," he said.

Other successes include the hiring of about 1,500 new scientists and engineers in the last decade, and growing the work NAWCWD does.

"Another thing we've been successful doing in NAWCWD is changing the conversation inside the Pentagon and inside the Beltway about the importance of a strong, competent in-house technical capability within the Navy, and making sure that technical capability is doing meaningful things to support the fleet," O'Neil said.

This improvement in NAWCWD's perception with leadership is key when the conversation turns to the possibility of another round of BRAC. O'Neil said he

sees NAWCWD, China Lake and Point Mugu as being in a good position for another BRAC, if there is one, in large part because of the assets — the sea range and the large amount of land and airspace — that could never be replaced.

"Beyond that, I think we have a number of things going for us," O'Neil said. "First off, one of the big factors in BRAC decisions is military value, and I think right now — this is my opinion, and I'll say it anywhere, in the Pentagon or elsewhere — I think right now, NAWCWD's military value is as high as it's been in my career, probably since Vietnam at the start of my career. I think right now, we're seen in a very positive light with Navy leadership. We're seen as innovative, we're seen as technically competent, and we're seen as an organization that can actually get stuff done."

All of which is proof of a Weapons Division that's in better position now than when O'Neil took over a decade ago.

Another China Lake trump card in a potential BRAC: The Navy spent nearly \$400 million in building projects at China Lake as part of the BRAC 2005 realignment, and would like to not walk away from that so soon.

O'Neil will officially retire on Jan. 3, 2016, and on Jan. 4, he will move into his new role, helping the Navy leadership to rebuild the Navy lab and the technical infrastructure, as part of the move to do more research, development and building in-house rather than contracting it out to industry.



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