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ON THE COVER: Naval Air Warfare Center Weapons Division continues to develop new technologies that meet the needs of the warfighter. U.S. Navy photo by Paul Kakert.
NAWCWD breaks records in FY2018, is ‘well positioned’ for the future

Naval Air Warfare Center Weapons Division broke financial and hiring records in fiscal year 2018, hiring more, contracting more, and taking more new orders than ever before.

Overall new orders came in at $1.78 billion, about $100 million more than budgeted for FY18, according to Merrie Giles, NAWCWD comptroller. The additional new orders required additional hiring, pushing total end-strength to 6,035 personnel, 39 more than anticipated.

In the end, NAWCWD closed out FY18 with 412 more employees than in FY17. But that’s not the whole story.

“Our total hires were higher than any year in WD history,” said Richard Cracraft, NAWCWD’s director of Total Force Strategy and Management. “Our attrition was also higher than it has been since the late ‘90s.”

So what does adding more than 400 employees coupled with high attrition look like? It looks like 866 hiring actions.

“Our team did a great job this year,” Cracraft said. “We were able to use Direct Hiring Authorities in greater numbers than we have in the past. We also maximized our DHA to bring in the largest cohort of ESPDs in our history — 303.”

ESDPs are participants in the entry-level Engineer and Scientist Development Program.

In FY18, Contracts personnel awarded contracts worth $3.7 billion and obligated more than $1 billion for the first time. These awards included a record $291 million in small business obligations.

“The team faced a rapidly changing environment in FY18,” said Collin Kyte, NAWCWD director for contracts. Changes included acquisition threshold changes that “allowed larger and more complex projects to be procured via simplified acquisition procedures, resulting in significant time savings.”

The major contracts team completed nearly 3,000 contract actions in the fiscal year, and awarded the largest single contract in NAWCWD history. The $1.5 billion contract with Boeing provides system upgrades for the F/A-18.
The action was completed six months ahead of schedule and included a negotiated cost savings of about $157 million, according to Kyte. Other changes allowed purchase card transactions to be used for higher-value supplies.

“WD was on the forefront of granting full purchase card authority within 60 days,” Kyte said. “This aggressive approach translated to more than 1,400 additional purchase card transactions being processed in the last three quarters of the fiscal year.”

For Kyte, contracting and purchasing is about being a good steward of taxpayer dollars, but also and perhaps more importantly — it’s about supporting the fleet.

“By effectively and efficiently completing our portion of the mission, we enable key development activities and the issuance of new technology and capability directly into the hands of the warfighter,” he said.

For 75 years, the Navy at China Lake has delivered state-of-the-art weapon systems to the warfighter.
Students participate in the STEAM camp held by High Desert Leapin' Lizards at the Kerr McGee Center on Wednesday, with a focus on forensics. The next two camps are the weeks of July 16 and July 23.

Program focuses on forensics Wednesday, aims to teach science, tech, engineering, arts and math over summer.
January 2019 marked the conclusion of Cerro Coso Community College’s 45th Anniversary celebration as an independent college of the Kern Community College District (KCCD). The college has seen remarkable growth over the last 45 years, and with that have come great opportunities and challenges.

Today, Cerro Coso has expanded its services to seven instructional sites that include the East Kern region of California City, Mojave, Boron, Edwards Air Force Base, Lake Isabella and Tehachapi. The East Kern region, combined with all other CCCC campus locations, form the largest geographical service area of any community college in California and serve a rural population of more than 144,600 over a three-county region of eastern California.

With a spirit of innovation and creativity, the college consistently engages in activities designed to enhance the learning environment and provide for the ever-changing needs of the students and communities they serve. The East Kern region of California City, Mojave, Boron and Tehachapi has quickly become an area of opportunity that has seen much growth over the last four years.

Responding to growth successfully requires creativity, forethought, innovation and resources. In 2015, the college extended academic offerings in East Kern to include Tehachapi, filling a critical and growing need. In the fall of 2015, the college offered five classes with an enrollment of 69 students in the evening at the Tehachapi Education Center. This spring, the college is offering three degree and two certificate programs during the school day. Students can also earn an associate degree for transfer by participating in the college’s dual and concurrent enrollment programs. Both afford students the ability to gain a head start on their college/career training, and have quickly become very popular throughout the region.

Cerro Coso Community College strives to improve people’s lives through learning – no matter where they are within their service area. The college now offers educational programs in two California prisons located in Tehachapi and California City. Offering hope for a better future, the program is designed to help students transition back into society upon release, effectively reducing recidivism.

Each year, hundreds of thousands of formerly incarcerated individuals are released back into society. Along with a high rate of incarceration, the U.S. also has a high rate of recidivism, meaning those who have been incarcerated are likely to return to prison after their release. According to a 2013 Rand Corporation study, the rate of recidivism for inmates with no education is 86 percent. For those inmates who participate in college programs it is 43 percent, and the number drops to 16 percent for those earning an associate’s degree, 6 percent for those earning a bachelor’s degree, and 0 percent for those earning a master’s degree.

Twenty-five inmates from the California City Correctional Facility became the first graduates of the college’s Incarcerated Student Education Program (ISEP) in 2018. All earned associate’s degrees. In addition to the 25 graduates, 63 incarcerated students qualified for the Phi Theta Kappa (PTK) International Honor Society. To be invited to join PTK a student must complete a minimum of 12 units and hold a GPA of 3.5 or higher. The success of Cerro Coso’s ISEP has received both state and national attention.

“These programs highlight the new realities of the 21st century community college,” said Cerro Coso President Jill Board.

The college will continue to play a vital role in the economic development of the East Kern region by providing sustainable systematic growth in developing programs and services to meet local workforce needs. New programs and initiatives are best done in partnerships with others. KCCD owns 20 acres of land in California City, and the college is looking to partner with industries to develop an agricultural research center that will provide students real-world training for jobs in agriculture and research.

“We are simply doing what we have always done and will always do,” said Board. “We are providing the opportunities and means for people to broaden their horizons and improve their lives, meeting local workforce needs for qualified employees, and strengthening the economies of the communities we serve.”

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Past, present and future of the Mojave Air and Space Port

BY JESSICA WESTON
The Daily Independent

On Dec. 12, 2018, Kern County once again made international news when Virgin Galactic’s SpaceShip Unity was released from a carrier aircraft and ignited its rocket engine. The two-pilot aircraft reached an altitude of 51 miles before gliding back to the ground at the Mojave Air and Space Port.

The successful flight marked a return to space for Virgin Galactic, as the company shares the opinion of the Air Force and other U.S. agencies that 50 miles is the boundary to space.

Virgin Galactic’s spaceship development had a tragic delay when its first experimental spacecraft broke apart during a test flight on Oct. 31, 2014, killing co-pilot Michael Alsbury.

The flight in December marked another forward step in Virgin Galactic’s plan to make history by providing commercial space flights.

It also may have been the latest time the Mojave Air and Space Port made history, but it was not the first time.

During its nearly 80-year history, the Mojave Airport/Mojave Air and Space Port has been the scene of a string of historic firsts – most notably the develop-

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VSS Unity takes to the skies for its first spaceflight Dec. 12, 2018, at Mojave Air and Space Port.

A colorful history
The Mojave Airport got its start in 1935, when it was opened to serve the local gold and silver mining industries. During World War II, it was taken over by the U.S. Marine Corps in July 1942 and expanded into the Marine Corps Auxiliary Air Stations (MCAAS) Mojave. After the war ended, it was disestablished in 1946, becoming a U.S. Navy airfield. In 1953, MCAAS was reopened by the USMC as an auxiliary field to the MCAS in El Toro.

Kern County obtained title to the Mojave Airport in 1961, after the U.S. Marine Corps transferred operations to El Centro. The East Kern Airport District was formed in 1972 to administrate the airport, and still maintains it.

In 2004, the airport became the Mojave Air and Space Port, the first and only private airport in the country with a commercial spaceport license.

Since its inception, the Mojave Air and Space Port has become a 3,300-acre flight research center of world renown, where more than 60 companies engage in producing light industrial work to the most advanced aeronautical designs.

The Mojave Air and Space Port shares restricted air space with military neighbors Edwards Air Force Base and Naval Air Weapons Station China Lake. It
has a 12,500-foot runway, a control tower operated during the week with radar, and an onsite fire department.

Specialty companies at the Mojave Air and Space Port currently focus on noise reduction technology, engine development and advanced cockpit display development, as well as major airframe design modifications.

Also located at the Mojave Air and Space Port is the National Test Pilot School, which educates more test pilots than any other site in the world.

**SpaceShipOne and the Ansari X Prize**

The Mojave Air and Space Port first grabbed the attention of the world in 2004, when the experimental SpaceShipOne completed the first privately funded human spaceflights at Mojave – winning the $10 million Ansari X Prize.


The requirements for winning the X Prize included reaching the 100-kilometer altitude twice in a two-week period with the equivalent of three people on board and with no more than 10 percent of the non-fuel weight of the spacecraft replaced between flights.

In an historic move, SpaceShipOne was developed using no government funding. It was developed by the legendary Burt Rutan’s aerospace company, Scaled Composites, and features a hybrid rocket motor.

It also used a unique “shuttleclock” re-entry system, in which the rear half of the wing and the twin tail booms folded upward along a hinge running the length of the wing. This increases drag while remaining stable.

The history-making X Prize flight was partially timed to coincide with the 47th anniversary of the Soviet launch of the Sputnik spacecraft.

SpaceShipOne is keeping good company. It now hangs in the Smithsonian Air & Space Museum with the Apollo 11 command module and Kitty Hawk.

**Commercial Space Industry**

Following the historic X Prize win in 2004, the Mojave Air and Space Port has stayed in the news. Stu Witt was the guy in charge in 2004 when SpaceShipOne won the X Prize.

“It was a ‘pinch me’ moment for me, but it wasn’t hard to see there was such momentum in the private sector ... what everybody said was a circus act has turned into a trillion-dollar industry,” Witt told the Daily Independent in 2018 about the commercial space industry.

Witt retired as CEO of the Mojave Air and Space Port in 2016, but remains a key player in the space game.

Witt was named to Vice President Mike Pence's National Space Council Users Advisory Group last year. He was also at the White House when President Donald Trump announced last June that he plans to establish a United States Space Force as a sixth military branch.

Witt told the Daily Independent on a podcast in August that he is optimistic about the future of space travel.

“I think we are going to have Americans in space on American vehicles in the next 12 months,” he said. Mojave Air and Space Port CEO Karina Drees took over for Witt. In a presentation to the Indian Wells Valley Economic Outlook Conference last year, Drees said Mojave is known as the place for space.

“We’re becoming known more for the commercial
The reason is simple: “a lot of the commercial space companies can do everything in Mojave. They can do their design, their manufacture build, flight test, rocket test and operations, all in one place.”

According to Drees, 70 percent of the Mojave Air and Space Port’s business is aerospace, which is divided between defense companies such as Boeing, Lockheed and Northrop and “the new space industry” with companies such as Virgin Galactic, the Spaceship Company, and Stratolaunch in particular.

“You’ve got a lot of companies that are developing very powerful vertical rockets like Space X,” she said, “and then you’ve got these companies like Stratolaunch and Virgin Galactic and Virgin Orbit that are developing these air launch systems. It completely changes how we think about getting to space.

“IT’s an interesting time to be in the industry and its a very interesting time to be in Mojave ... I really believe Mojave is the place that is going to make this happen, because everything comes together in Mojave that doesn’t come together anywhere else.”

Drees also noted that the current administration has shown renewed interest in space. Vice President Pence visited the Mojave Air and Space Port in October 2017 and, of course, has resurrected the National Space Council.

And then there’s Sir Richard Branson. SpaceShipOne founder Paul Allen licensed the SpaceShipOne technology to Branson and Virgin Galactic.

Branson unveiled the the SpaceShipTwo VSS Unity at the Mojave Air and Space Port in February 2016, and Virgin Galactic continues to pursue the dream of making space tourism a reality.

Allen, meanwhile, went on to complete the world’s largest airplane in an enormous hangar at the Mojave Air and Space Port. The Stratolaunch, which has a wider wingspan than Howard Hughes’ Spruce Goose, was rolled out of that hangar for the first time on May 31, 2017.

What’s new for 2019?

Look for the Mojave Air and Space Port to continue to promote safe airspace integration in 2019. Also in the wings: likely the first flight of the Stratolaunch and additional spaceship flight tests, and maybe even a commercial space launch.

The Mojave Air and Space Port will also work on upgrades. Pavement upgrades are in the works with the FAA’s Office of Airports assisting, and the control tower radios and STARS radar system will also be upgraded in 2019. Overhauling will also begin on decades-old water line infrastructure and improving the facilities perimeter roads.

Other fun facts

The Voyager Airport at the Mojave Air and Space Port shares a name with Scaled Composites Model 76 Voyager, which was the first aircraft in history to fly around the world without stopping to refuel. Burt Rutan was in on this as well; he drew the first idea for the Voyager on a napkin while having lunch with his brother Dick Rutan and Jeana Yeager in 1981.

The Mojave Air and Space Port was also the scene of the first flight of the EZ-Rocket, a tiny build-it-yourself plane with rockets. Its rocket engines ran on isopropyl alcohol and liquid oxygen. It was designed, built and tested by EXCOR Aerospace. According to the Mojave Air and Space Port website, it was designed “to show that a rocket powered vehicle could reliably and economically be flown several times a day.”

The XCOR EZ-Rocket had its first flight on July 21, 2001 – with only one engine. It flew with two engines on Oct. 3, 2001, at which time it reached an altitude of 1.7 miles above the Mojave Airport before exhausting its propellants. Dick Rutan was once again involved as the test pilot. He also set a world distance record when he flew the EZ-Rocket on Dec. 3, 2005.

In all, the EZ-Rocket was flown 26 times before it was retired.

For more on the past, present and future of the Mojave Air and Space Port, see https://www.mojaveairport.com/.
It has been a little over two years, but it seems much longer. After dominating Ridgecrest City Council meetings, Facebook and local gossip since April 2016, the Timbisha Shoshone casino controversy appeared to halt abruptly in December when the Ridgecrest City Council voted unanimously to terminate the land sale agreement between the city’s redevelopment agency and Global Investment Enterprise Ridgecrest, LLC, for the piece of property intended to be used as a casino.

Although the vote was arguably a technicality – the agreement essentially timed out when the buyer failed to provide the funds for the purchase by the deadline and the property fell out of escrow – most people cheered or mourned this as the end of the casino project. According to casino developer Nigel White, however, it’s not over yet. White told the Daily Independent in mid-January that “the casino project is alive and well” and cautioned anyone against calling the hand too quickly.

With that in mind, let’s take a look back.

A divisive game

The city first became aware of the possibility of a Timbisha Shoshone casino in Ridgecrest by way of a city council meeting in April 2016. The item on the table was whether the city should enter into a municipal services agreement with the tribe which would provide the Ridgecrest general fund with at least $400,000 a year (more if the casino were very successful), a one-time payment of $80,000 for a new police car, annual fees of $128,000 for critical municipal services, and other bonuses and benefits.

The public turned out in droves to that first meeting, and what most of them had to say was “No!” The potential benefits to the cash-strapped city were outweighed in many people’s minds by concerns over increased crime, bankruptcies, encouraging gambling addictions and interfering with the mission of the base (which, interestingly, never did come out against the project in any official capacity).
Perhaps more significantly, the project struck a moral note with many, who feared it would either degrade the local quality of life or even anger God himself. Concerns about the “wrath of God” have been expressed repeatedly throughout the life of the project.

What followed was untold hours of public comment, as the Ridgecrest City Council spent weeks weighing the project at council meetings and a town hall. Once word of the project got loose on social media, supporters of the casino also turned out in droves. Each side distributed fliers, buttons and fact sheets at many meetings.

As with any circus shows, there were diverting sidelines. Some were suspicious when it was revealed that the land intended for the project was half-owned by Joann Clark, the wife of former Mayor Dan Clark – who, as one of the founders of the Petroglyph Festival, has had a long-standing relationship with all the local tribes.

Hackles were raised when it was revealed that a rendering purporting to show what the project would look like was an older drawing that had been reused, although casino developer Nigel White said that this was obviously an older drawing and only meant to show the architectural style being considered.

The Daily Independent in September 2016, meanwhile, reviewed more than 700 emails obtained from the city under the California Public Records Act and found some bias and manipulative tactics – but no smoking gun showing actual wrongdoing by any of the principals.

Council eventually approved a first version of the MSA in May 2016. The vote was 4-1, with then-Councilman James Sanders the lone holdout. The final version of the MSA was approved in June 2016 with a 3-2 vote. Mayor Peggy Breeden and Councilman Michael Mower along with then-Councilwoman Lori Acton voted yes. Sanders and then-Councilman Eddie Thomas voted no.

The land sale was approved three to two in September 2016. Mayor Peggy Breeden embodied the anguish many had felt when she hesitated before casting her yes vote.

With the MSA and land sale in place, the project seemed to be off to a promising start – but appearances were deceiving.

The casino opponents did not give up. Councilwoman Lindsey Stephens and Councilman Wallace Martin are widely considered to have ridden the anti-casino wave all the way to their elected posts. Stephens and Martin both continued to question the project from the dais as everyone waited to see what the Bureau of Indian Affairs and the Department of the Interior would do.

The topic was technically off the table with council, but it never seemed to go away.

Casino opponents continued to line up at council meetings during public comment to express their objections to the project. These included heavy-hitter Mark Storch, a former NAWCWD commander, who stated that he was concerned a
casino by the front gate of the base could be problematic in the event of an upcoming Base Realignment and Closure process. Comments on the tribe’s environmental process, however, indicated that the base apparently considered issues caused by the casino as being able to be mitigated.

Allegations of racism again entered the fray, when an email obtained by the DI distributed among casino opponents contained racist references to “injuns” and other offensive characterizations. This echoed comments from the tribe early in the process that they felt some of the language used to describe them was racist or had racist overtones.

Casino opponents, meanwhile, objected to changes in the proposed environmental process. Timbisha Shoshone Chair George Gholson responded that the tribe is as new to the process as anyone else and any changes or mistakes were due to their inexperience.

So vocal were the anti-casino contingent that the tribe eventually agreed to an MSA amendment.

The Ridgecrest City Council voted 3-2 in August 2018 to approve an amendment to the 2016 MSA specifying restrictions on groundwater use on the casino trust lands, prohibiting the use of trust lands for commercial cannabis purposes, and clarifying the meeting schedule of the tribal-city advisory committee. The first two issues had been repeatedly brought up by some members of the public during casino discussions at past meetings —although it was never clear whether anyone had any real grounds for thinking the tribe was even contemplating these actions. Gholson and White both repeatedly stated unequivocally that the tribe had no plans for either cannabis cultivation or selling and pumping water, for example.

And there were many other related issues.

The casino played a role in last November’s election too, with mystery mailers slamming council candidate Scott Hayman (a casino opponent) inaccurately and praising supposedly pro-casino candidates who disavowed any connection with Honesty PAC, which sent the mailers out.

In the end, it all came down to land.

Once the escrow agreement timed out, it seemed likely that the project was dead or at least stalled. The Ridgecrest City Council, of course, could have voted to extend the escrow but chose not to take this on.

The municipal services agreement between the City of Ridgecrest and the tribe remains in effect, but without the piece of property it was attached to its power is unclear.

So what, if anything, is next?

That is hard to say.

Rumors continue to fly about the project moving to another area in town or into an unincorporated county area. Were the tribe to build in the county, the City of Ridgecrest of course would no longer get the $400,000-plus annually.
White, as noted above, says the project is alive and well and stands to bring some 361 jobs to the area if it does in fact take place. Gholson, who has been succeeded by White Dove Kennedy as Timbisha Shoshone Chair, had no comment.

Kern County Administrative Officer Ryan Alsop in December stated unequivocally that he knew nothing about a Timbisha Shoshone project in unincorporated Kern County.

“I haven’t been approached. I know nothing about that plan,” he said. “I think I probably would know unless there are some sort of mid-level discussions happening. But nobody has had any discussions with me about that.”

TOP LEFT: Timbisha Shoshone Tribal Chair George Gholson speaks during the Ridgecrest City Council meeting on March 21, 2018.
ABOVE: A packed room listens to resident Ricky Fielding speak at the Ridgecrest City Council meeting March 21, 2018.

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A look at Trona’s past, present and future

BY LAUREN JENNINGS
The Daily Independent

Trona, full of interesting history and plenty of projects, has much in store for 2019.

Recent Projects
Trona has made multiple improvements to its town over the past couple of years. The town is largely dependent on Searles Valley Minerals, which has continued to expand production of its products since being founded over 100 years ago.

“Searles Valley Minerals is an excellent community member, donates thousands of dollars and provides many services to the community,” said Arzell Hale, Director of Government and Public Affairs at SVM.

The Searles Valley Historical Society now has five properties after the expansion of the Searles Valley Museum, including the old Guest House Museum, the Archive Center, the History House, the Trona Railway Museum and the Argus Fire Station.

A new boric acid plant was built five years ago, and amongst Trona’s current plans is a new sulfate of potash plant that is almost completed. The sulfate of potash plant will begin operations this year. Both of these plants were built by Trona’s local contractor, Valley Wide Construction Services.

The town itself has seen many improvements over the past few years as well, including high-speed wireless internet services and a Verizon Wireless cell tower (the town had no cell service before this), a new gasoline and diesel station, a new Family Dollar store, and a modernized general and hardware store.

The Searles Lake Gem and Mineral Show continues to be successful for Trona as well. The show just had its 77th consecutive show with over 3,000 people in attendance.

“This is one of the best, if not the best, gem and mineral shows in the U.S. People absolutely love it,” Hale said.

There are no major projects planned, as of right now, but Hale said that they are always looking at new products and ways to improve operations.

History of Trona and Searles Valley Minerals
Searles Valley has a lot of history to it and has been through a lot of trial and error before getting to where it is today. Multiple ownerships, new technology, plant shutdowns, and more have all played a part in Trona’s extensive history.

Searles Valley got its name after John Searles. In 1863, Searles was mining for silver and gold in the Slate Range Mountain, where he “complains that the soda from the salt flats below contained too much borax to properly process the ore.”

In 1873, he and his partners claimed 640 acres of what is now Searles Lake. They scraped naturally occurring crude borax efflorescence off of the surface of the deposit, and shortly thereafter, mineral production began. Searles used mules to haul borax in wagons to San Pedro, creating the San Bernardino Borax Mining Company.

Searles died in 1897; however, shortly before his death, he sold the San Bernardino Borax Mining Company to “Borax” Smith, where he created the Pacific Coast Borax Company. Smith soon shut down operations at Searles Lake.

It was not until 1926 that Borax production began again at the West End (now Westend) chemical plant. Around the same time, the American Potash and Chemical Corporation started “exploratory drilling” on Searles Lake, where they found a lower salt bed filled with brine, increasing their reserves even further.

In 1934, the American Potash and Chemical Company added soda ash and sodium sulfate to their production line and doubled their potash and borax capacity.

In 1962, a high tech solvent extraction process was introduced, developed and installed to the triple boric acid production. The company received national recognition and an award for this innovative process that they had created.

Kerr-McGee Chemical Corporation eventually acquired the Westend Plant, and from 1974 to 1988 improved processes, productions, and efficiency. In 1977, Kerr-McGee began operation of its new Argus power plant. This is the first large industrial boiler in California fired by coal.

In 1996, the North American Chemical Company improved borax mining on Searles Lake and used this to almost double borax production at the Westend Plant. They also increased soda ash production at the Argus Plant. Finally, they shut down all potash and borax production at the Trona Plant, bringing to an end the 81-year history of recovering potash from Searles Lake brines.

In 1998, IMC Global Incorporation acquired Trona’s North American Chemical Company, and then in 2004, Sun Capital acquired IMC Chemicals Incorporated and renamed the business Searles Valley Minerals, Inc. Nirma then acquired Searles Valley Incorporated, which brings us to recent history.

Products extracted by Searles Valley Minerals
Searles Lake contains one of the world’s richest deposits of naturally occurring minerals. Water under the lakebed mixes with minerals to form a brine that is 10 times saltier than seawater. The chemically diverse brine cocktail under the lake holds a supply of minerals so vast that it would take centuries to extract.

One of the products is soda ash, which lowers the temperature at which sand melts while making glass. Soda ash is found in windows, automotive glass, mirrors, bottles, tumblers, and dishes. The product is also used in some detergents, neutralization, and aluminum manufacturing.

The company also extracts borax, which is also found in detergents and personal care products. Borax is also used to make glass, ceramics, and insulation. It is also a corrosion inhibitor in antifreeze. V-BOR and PYROBOR, which are similar to Borax and are found in similar products, are also extracted here.

Boric acid can also be found here, which is used to make textile fiberglass for tire cord, to reinforce certain plastics and tapes, and for curtains. It can be used as a fire retardant, and is a preservative for wood and pesticides.

Anhydrous sodium sulfate is also extracted and is used in detergents and provides alkalinity control. It is a refining agent for container glass and is used to decompose wood to make paper and cardboard.

The Trona Railway Company is used to bring fuel and process chemicals to Searles Valley as well as delivering product to their customers. The plant logistics team manages and dispatches at least 30,000 orders for shipment to domestic and export customers.
California should utilize technology, work for you

BY ASSEMBLYMAN VINCE FONG
For The Daily Independent

Technology now touches every aspect of our lives. But as technology has improved our quality of life, government has not properly harnessed technology to help make life easier for the public. The most recent example of this has been the DMV, which has failed to implement basic technology infrastructure so that people do not have to wait hours at the DMV to get their license renewed or get additional services. Believe it or not, the DMV still cannot accept debit or credit cards in their offices — they can only do transactions via written checks, which is incomprehensible in 2019.

Kern County’s major industries continue to innovate and develop cutting-edge technology in order to thrive in an over-regulated state. We see this ingenuity every day in the work of neighbors and friends in our communities. Across the entire 400 square miles of the Indian Wells Valley and over 1,700 square miles of NAWS China Lake, the military technology and aerospace advancements that are being developed advance our nation, and protect the men and women of our armed forces.

Technology also plays a valuable role in bringing government closer to the people we serve. Our technology can make government’s business more transparent and accountable to the public. Here are some of my basic technology-in-government ideas that will make government work better for you:

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