

Final Final Final

**Desert Tortoise Council
Minutes of the Board of Directors Meeting**

**7 January 2017
Sam's Town Hotel and Gambling Hall
Las Vegas, Nevada**

CALL TO ORDER

The meeting was called to order by Bruce Palmer at 10:00 a.m. **Action items are in blue, with responsible parties in red. Motions made, seconded, and approved (or not) are shown in bold red font.**

Attendees: Kristin Berry, Peter Woodman, Ken MacDonald, Cristina Jones, Maggie Fusari, Mari Quillman, Bruce Palmer, Michael Tuma, Becky Jones, Joe Probst, Ed LaRue, Jason Jones, Larry LaPré, and Chris Noddings (by remote web-link). **Absent:** Scott Abella. **Guests:** Tracy Bailey was here to help with Symposium planning.

A. Introductions: None.

B. Review Agenda: New issues (Springs Preserve and Betty Burge memorial) were incorporated as needed.

C. Meeting Minutes of 22 October 2016: Ed LaRue prepared draft minutes at the last Board meeting in Las Vegas, Nevada on 22 October 2016, which were distributed, reviewed, and approved today as final with minor changes. **Motion made (Ken MacDonald), seconded (Kristin Berry), and unanimously approved to accept the draft minutes as amended to be final.**

D. Review of Board Actions since Last Board Meeting: There were three actions completed since October 22, 2016 including expenditure of funds for Bruce Palmer to attend the MOG meeting in Las Vegas in December 2016, which was passed on November 22, 2016; approval of award nominations on December 22, 2016; and approval of plaques for awardees on January 3, 2017.

OFFICER/COMMITTEE REPORT

E. Treasurer's Report: The Treasurer's Report was distributed by Joe Probst. As of December 31, 2016 we had total assets of \$288,791.65, with a total income of \$139,308.24, and expenses of \$147,056.26. **Motion made (Becky Jones), seconded (Maggie Fusari), and unanimously approved to accept the Treasurer's Report as final.**

a. Review of 2017 budget: Joe Probst also provided a spread sheet covering estimated and actual expenditures for 2015 and 2016, and the anticipated budget for 2017. There was never a formal vote to approve the 2016 budget, with an estimated expenditure of \$167,150 and actual expenditure of \$147,056.26. Joe Probst is asked to change “Advanced Training” to “Authorized Biologist” workshop. Bruce Palmer asked that some of the line items be further defined. Each Board member is asked to work with Joe Probst to identify expected expenditures for their respective responsibilities, and particularly guest speakers at each Symposium. • Joe Probst is asked to change “Grants and Awards” to “Grants and Student Awards;” • to specifically show the EAC expenditures incurred by Ed LaRue; • to show Board meeting costs from other travel expenditures, such as EAC travel; • and to show both the income and expenditures for the 2015, 2016, and 2017 to help develop future budgets. Once the 2017 budget is approved with specific line items, each Board member can work within that budget without approval of expenditures until that line item is spent.

We noted that the \$20,000 line item for Grants and Awards will not cover land management for Bolson tortoises and \$10,000 for the Betty Burge memorial, which are expenditures that need their own line items. Ken MacDonald made a motion to accept the proposed 2017 budget with additional line items of \$20,000 in anticipation of Bolson tortoise management (see item V below) and \$10,000 for the Betty Burge memorial (both previously approved motions) with an additional \$20,000 for future unforeseen projects and opportunities, seconded by Maggie Fusari, and approved with Larry LaPré opposing.

b. Annual Audit: The 2017 annual audit will be completed by Ray Butler and Joe Probst at the 2017 Symposium.

F. Corresponding Secretary’s Report: Becky Jones provided a verbal account of materials received since the October 2016 Board meeting. There was a \$500 donation from Ironwood Consulting, which is likely to be applied to the 2017 Symposium. When emails are received concerning pet tortoises in California she directs those to the CTTC groups. There have been a few workshop questions that were forwarded to Maggie Fusari. Michael Tuma talked to a student who first contacted Becky Jones, who reported later that they received an A on the project.

a. Board contact list: Becky Jones will distribute the latest Board contact list.

b. Set up a new post office box: Although there was previous concern that Becky Jones and Joe Probst’s house was being shown in social media, the photo is not of their home. Facebook shows the post office, not their home. They do have financial documents (checks, Fed-X) sent to their home, but that information is not publicized. When the Council is Googled, it shows Tracy’ Bailey’s home, which Michael Tuma corrected during this meeting, so her home is no longer shown on the website.

G. Membership Coordinator’s/Membership Committee Report: Mari Quillman distributed her report electronically prior to the Board meeting.

H. Awards Committee Reports: Kristin Berry handed out the list of awards, which as tradition dictates to maintain anonymity, are not included in these minutes. In an earlier vote, Mari Quillman was approved to acquire the plaques for the 2017 awardees.

I. Nominations Committee Report:

a. Reappointment of Board Members at Large: Cristina Jones, Chris Noddings, and Ken MacDonald each need to be reappointed if they choose to be. Each of them indicated that they would be willing to be reappointed. They then left the room (Chris from the computer) and were unanimously approved for reappointment. **Motions made (Becky Jones), seconded (Joe Probst), and unanimously approved to reappoint Cristina Jones, Chris Noddings, and Ken MacDonald as Board Members At Large.**

b. Resigning: Scott Abella and Jason Jones are both leaving the board (Jason may rejoin us later after his boys are older).

c. Board vacancies: Several Board members have provided suggested nominations to Michael Tuma who will begin approaching various people as potential Board members. We are specifically looking for an academic(s) and a “millennial” (maybe a student Board member). Please provide Michael Tuma with any other potential member nominations.

d. Officer election slate of candidates: Office positions requiring re-election include Membership Coordinator (Mari Quillman), Recording Secretary (Ed LaRue), and Chair-elect (Michael Tuma). Each of these people agreed to continue to serve.

J. Ecosystems Advisory Committee (EAC) Report:

a. Review of EAC Table for 10/22/2016 to 1/7/2017: Significant projects on which we commented since late October 2016 included the following California projects: Draft Supplemental Environmental Impact Statement for translocation of tortoises at 29 Palms Marine Corps Base, Ord Mountain Allotment Environmental Assessment, the San Bernardino County renewable energy plan, the Eagle Crest pump project (which we decided to not cosign), and the Cadiz Pipeline sign-on letter with National Park Conservation Association. The only other project was the Desert National Wildlife Refuge in Nevada. Ed LaRue thanked Larry LaPré for his proactive input.

Given the 29 Palms translocation, it is important that we finish our translocation BMPs ASAP, which Michael Tuma and Kristin Berry have already been planning. We heard yesterday that BLM in Nevada will soon be providing a draft EA updating their existing translocation EA. [Ed LaRue will send a letter to Mark Slaughter asking for a copy of the BLM’s translocation EA for Nevada.](#) The interaction between Ed LaRue and Michael Tuma to hand-deliver the technical report on Mohave ground squirrel to the San Bernardino Planning Commission seemed to work very well, as the Planning Commission recognized this as new information and may withdraw the Bowling Alley area as a development focus area for solar development.

Chris Noddings subsequently led a discussion about the process for writing comment letters, expressing his concern with the current approach. He provided several hours of time on comments that were not included in one comment letter (eight Board members had already approved the letter). He was concerned that this particular comment letter was not science-based. If people give Ed LaRue an indication that they will or will not comment, he will try to accommodate them. He will also wait until the cited due date in his cover emails and not send comment letters prior to the indicated date. Ed re-emphasized that he needs input from other Board members to ensure that our comment letters are sufficiently science based.

b. Management Oversight Group: Bruce Palmer attended the recent MOG meeting rather than Ed LaRue. This item was not specifically discussed, as Bruce Palmer was out of the room with the host committee discussing facilities logistics.

K. Grants Committee Report:

L. Information, Outreach, and Social Media Committee Report: Via website, Chris Nodding reported we now have 917 media “likes.” Chris did not receive any information from Board members to post on social media. He created a link that informs people to send formal correspondence to Becky Jones via email. **Chris Noddings will ask that interested parties contact Becky Jones via the Council website rather than through her personal email.** Michael Tuma indicated he and Bianca Cirimele were able to use Facebook and Twitter to publish the availability of the Newsletter.

M. Newsletter Editor’s Report: The Newsletter was issued last month and was posted on Facebook and Twitter as being available. **Michael Tuma will approach several people at the Symposium for information, and asked that Pete Woodman take photographs and provide a brief note to be included in the Newsletter.** • **Michael Tuma will ask Vern Bleich to provide a write up on the deer talks scheduled for the Symposium and talk to Todd Esque and Leslie DeFalco about providing information on their restoration research.** Ann McLuckie was featured in the latest Newsletter. Maggie Fusari suggested that Leslie DeFalco should be featured in future Newsletters. There has been no response to a blurb in the Newsletter asking for sponsors. **Michael Tuma will make an announcement at the Symposium asking for Newsletter sponsors, and will work with Mari Quillman to identify potential sponsors.** • **Ed LaRue will provide a brief note on his and Kristin Berry’s involvement in the annual workshop in Joshua Tree at Copper Mountain College.**

N. Web Master’s Report: At the last meeting, we discussed possibly redesigning the website, which has not changed since then.

O. Agency Coordination Committee: Led by Cristina Jones, six Council Board members met with Nevada agency biologists yesterday to discuss coordination between the Council and the agencies. **Ed LaRue captured minutes that will be circulated to all Board members in attendance for review.** The meeting of 16 biologists was judged to be a success, initiating good dialogue among Council Board members and state/federal agency biologists who are implementing recovery actions in Nevada. It may be good to perform the next session in California to involve other agencies that were not included when we met with the USFWS and BLM in 2016.

P. Basic Techniques Workshop: Maggie Fusari reported there were 84 attendees, and 70+ students have completed the test so far. She provided us with a spread sheet of expenses and income, which showed a profit of \$16,513.09. She also suggested that we need to consider the relationship between this basic workshop and the Authorized Biologist workshop, and to consider more education outreach. Ed LaRue expressed his strong interest and intent in continuing to be involved as instructor and emcee at future workshops. The 2017 workshop would, as usual, be planned for early November. **Becky Jones will seek to find the educational kits that were developed by National Park Service, perhaps in Joshua Tree,** which included freeze dried animals among other materials. Michael Tuma recommended that we develop an education committee, with Maggie Fusari expressing interest in being involved.

Q. Authorized Biologist Training: “Pete” below = Pete Woodman.

a. Coordination with USFWS, CA, NV, AZ, UT (permits and expectations):

Yesterday’s meeting really facilitated things. USFWS is fully on board. Scott Hoffman out of Palm Springs will represent the USFWS, with an internal conference call planned on Tuesday, which will include discussion on our workshop. Roy Averill-Murray will draft a MOU between the USFWS and Council that describes the cooperative nature of the workshop.

b. Requirements of various authorizing agencies: Field instructors will be added to the DTRO’s list of approved biologists so they can process tortoises at the LSTS.

c. Approved and unapproved activities under issued permits: There will be no cell phone use during the course, both in the class and in the field.

d. Dates: We would meet at mid-morning on Monday and finish Friday afternoon, so it will involve five full days. Friday would end with a review and practical exam. Pending input from USFWS instructors, the dates will be April 24 through 28, 2017.

e. Location: The Desert Tortoise Conservation Center will be made available to create artificial burrows, and choose a site that can be used for multiple years.

f. Funding transmitters at LSTS: There will be a day and a half on the LSTS where there is lots of sign, including carcasses.

g. Syllabus: There has been good response from many Board members, so the syllabus has been changed, not including a few comments received in the past few days. **Pete will convert the syllabus ASAP into a succinct schedule that will be posted on the website.** We would plan to have dinner provided and the ask-it-basket event on Wednesday evening.

h. Instructors/reimbursement: All of the original instructors are still planning to participate. Jason Jones and Cristina Jones would be talking on *population* monitoring whereas Ed LaRue’s presentation would be on *construction* monitoring. Many of the agency instructors do not have much experience in construction monitoring and (maybe) field work. Pete would like to see all instructors’ talks in pdf form by the 1st of April to ensure consistency and avoid redundancy. Pete is still considering a few instructors to help with this level of health assessments and disease, including shell disease.

i. Equipment needs: Pete’s list of equipment needs is to be provided to each of the students, particularly since they will need these materials later when working as Authorized Biologists.

j. Registration fees and budget: The fee is \$2,000 per student. They can sign in through the website, the application information will be forwarded to Cristina Jones, and PayPal will forward the money to Joe Probst. The estimated expenditure is \$25,000 (\$30,000 is in the annual budget) to put on the workshop with \$60,000 income if 30 students attend.

k. Eligibility/Qualifications: There has been a lot of discussion about required hours of experience to be qualified. Pete felt that there would be plenty of people meeting these qualifications. There were 20 applicants when we tentatively offered this course last fall. Kristin Berry would still like to see how many prospective students have attended the basic handling techniques course. We plan to limit attendance to two people per company. We have to assume that each student is being honest about reporting their levels of experience.

l. Application form: **Pete will soon complete the application form.**

m. Screening applicants: Attendance will be limited to the first 30 people meeting the minimum number of hours of prior experience. **Larry LaPré agreed to ground-truth students’ qualifications.**

n. Pre-requisite readings: Kristin Berry has agreed to help develop a reading list of required materials that are to be read before attending.

o. Pre-test/post-test: Once the classroom test is complete, students will grade their own tests and be done by noon. Field performances would be assessed and added to the graded tests. At the end of the day, around four o'clock, USFWS would issue the certificates to those students who passed the test.

p. Recruiting attendees: Pete will convert the syllabus into a succinct schedule that will be posted on the website and given to prospective students. We hope to have concurrence from the agencies by mid-February and a schedule soon thereafter so that it can be posted on the website and announced at the Symposium. We will contact the initial 20 prospective students first asking for a new application before posting on the website for other students.

q. Participation by agency biologists: Roy Averill-Murray asked if agency biologists can attend, presumably for free. There was consensus that agency people should also have to pay for this course. Pete Woodman will tell Scott Hoffman that we will hold up to five paid positions for USFWS. These people should have attended the basic course, first.

r. Vehicle magnets / hard hat stickers: We can bring hard hat stickers left over from the Symposium and provide some to the students. Similarly, some check under your vehicle magnets can be provided.

s. Miscellaneous: Bruce Palmer will work with Primm to ensure there are enough rooms for meals, meeting hall, and overnight rooms. • Each instructor needs to have five questions submitted to Pete by April 1 pertaining to each of their talks; no essay questions. Our goal is to have agency approval and a final agenda completed by January 30, 2017.

R. 42nd Annual Symposium – Host Committee: Tracy Bailey took the lead in this discussion.

a. 11:00 meeting with Hank of Sam's Town: Five or six key Board members accompanied Hank to look at the facilities while the remaining members discussed other items.

b. Points of contact: Tracy Bailey asked that Becky Jones provide her with the latest Board contact list. There are now 54 registrants, which is similar to last year at this time.

c. Budget: Kristin Berry needs to provide Tracy Bailey with a list of speakers to be compensated and the associated costs.

d. Rooms and setup: Ed LaRue volunteered to use a laser pointer on the stage-left screen to be coordinated with the right. Room set up is intended for about 250 to 275 people. We can always add more chairs not associated with tables.

e. Banners: Joe Probst will bring the banners and miscellaneous Council posters, including podium sign.

f. Meals: The Friday night mixer and banquet will be the same as last year, with many preferring the carving stations. Breakfasts would be the same as before, pending checking on numbers last year. In the future, we need to determine the cost for people who are only attending the banquet.

g. Schedule: The schedule will be similar to last year. The Program will be available after about January 20, 2017.

h. Breaks and refreshments: Make sure that these are coordinated with the program; several times last year, the refreshments were provided after the scheduled breaks.

i. Equipment/audio visuals: David Carr of ECORP will, as usual, oversee audio-visuals. We don't plan on having a laptop at the podium because many people would not know how to

use the mouse to point at portions of the slides. **Joe Probst** will bring the Power Point projector and **Ken MacDonald** and **Kristin Berry** will bring back-up projectors.

j. Field trip: Sam's Town may have two separate codes for those checking in before and after Thursday, although several people have been able to register under one code.

k. Photo contest: Joe Probst will oversee this contest as usual. Tracy Bailey has ordered five tack boards, which should be enough with only two posters scheduled so far. **Tracy Bailey** will be sure that we have at least six easels to accommodate sponsors and other needs.

l. Vendors: Tracy Bailey has five or six vendors already in line and a few more in mind, including the Desert Tortoise Preserve Committee. We will need someone to oversee our merchandise table since Doug Duncan cannot be here this year. **Maggie Fusari** will contact **Doug Duncan** to have our books delivered here in his absence.

m. Sponsors: Mari Quillman indicated that, so far, ECORP, Ironwood, and Power Engineers have each donated \$500. **Mari Quillman** will email another solicitation for sponsors next week. • **Mari Quillman** will coordinate with **Mary Cohen** to publish 2017 sponsors on the Symposium-associated portion of the website. Kristin Berry needs a list of final sponsors by the first of February

n. Hosted mixer? **Mari Quillman** will contact Southern Nevada Environmental Inc. to see if they want to host the mixer again on Thursday night. The cost of the mixer has been \$4,800, so if SNEI does not want to support this event, we may want to do so independently.

o. Raffle/Auction/Silent Auction: **Pete Woodman** will bring along various books he has, including signed Stebbins field guides. Mari Quillman suggested that there be a box beside an item where raffle tickets can be placed into the box for that product and later the ticket would be drawn to determine the winner. **Mari Quillman** will purchase a "GoPro" for about \$200 to be in the box, which would leave \$300 for other items. • **Mari Quillman** will look into purchasing art work of *Gopherus morafkai* from Hector Sanchez as an auction item and other raffle and auction items.

p. List of Volunteers: Molly Peters indicated she may have a few volunteers available. Par Singhaseni will be volunteering again this year. Without Doug Duncan, we will need to have a volunteer at the Council's book table only during the breaks, so they can be there for the presentations. Volunteers will be compensated, including rooms for some of them.

q. Fliers/Announcements/Web/Newsletters/Social Media: The packet stuffing will be four o'clock at the Searchlight conference room on Thursday afternoon. Tracy Bailey has ordered the folders and name tags (enough for the Symposium and the Authorized Biologist workshop). Molly Peters is printing the name tags and has the ribbons for speakers and Board members.

r. Swag items: Mari Quillman distributed a list of products and their costs, which are not reiterated herein. If they cost \$5.44/bandana, we could charge \$7.00 or \$8.00. She also plans to order 500 stickers to be given away. Koozies (a collapsible can holder) cost \$1.17 for 200 and can be sold for \$2.00. Mugs cost \$3.97 each and could be sold at \$10.00 each. **Motion made by Mari Quillman to acquire these swag products, as discussed, for \$2,796.68 plus set-up (\$160) and shipping (\$8/box) to be sold and given away, as discussed, seconded by Ken MacDonald, and unanimously approved.** There would be a profit of about \$2,000 assuming all materials are sold. Tiquilia and shot glasses will be there as usual.

s. Webcast: Chris Noddings suggested we could broadcast the Symposium over the three days for about \$450. We can also have a fee associated with it. It was suggested that we try this

next year so that we can look at numerous issues such as registration, permission by each of the speakers, etc.

S. 42nd Annual Symposium – Program Committee: Kristin Berry distributed a status report yesterday.

a. Program Facilitators/Session Chairs: There is a government session followed by 12 papers on mule deer in the desert. Amy Fesnock will oversee six papers and a panel on renewable energy. There is a disease session and one on tortoises in Mexico. There are conservation and nonprofit sessions, although they may be combined. Cristina Jones is overseeing four papers from Arizona. There are two posters. Michael Tuma is overseeing the evolution and paleontological session. Mary Brown will be returning after a few years of being absent. Kristin Berry also identified those speakers who have been in the last session in previous symposia to avoid having them in that position again.

b. Plenary Session: This session will include the first part of the morning with papers by Ann McLuckie and Scott Abella, who are receiving awards.

c. Major Sessions: As given above, major sessions will include renewable energy; deer in the desert; Sonoran desert tortoise; evolution of *Gopherus*; health and disease; Bolson tortoise; conservation; agencies; and poster sessions. We may feature burrowing owl and Mohave ground squirrel at the 2018 Symposium. Glenn Stewart has agreed to oversee judging for student papers, with help from Michael Tuma, Maggie Fusari, and Larry LaPré.

d. Evening Presentation: Eric Goode has tentatively agreed to provide a slide show on Bolson tortoise.

e. Book signing: ● Ed LaRue will contact Pam MacKay and Tim Thomas about bringing signed editions of their desert plant books that he is willing to sell in their absence.

f. Merchandise: Mari Quillman has been instrumental in getting together merchandise, including coffee mugs, flash drives, caps, Koozies, bandanas, and such.

OLD/NEW BUSINESS

T. Board Members At Large Appointments: See discussion under nominations.

U. Annual Business Meeting Procedures: We are required to have an annual treasurer's report emphasizing the general health of Council's ability to fund its functions; to vote on officers as required in the Bylaws; modifications of Bylaws, if any; and annual reports from each officer and committee chair. All Board members should have their summary reports to Bruce Palmer in the next few weeks. ● All Board members are asked to be in the room at 10:00 a.m. so that Bruce Palmer can introduce them to those in attendance.

V. Bolson Tortoise Land Acquisition: Note above that we approved a budgetary line item for the expenditure of \$20,000 to support management of Bolson tortoise habitat in the San Ignacio el Rancho in Durango, Mexico. They have acquired 43,000 acres and now need money for management, including acquisition of a vehicle and fencing. **Kristin Berry made a motion to redirect expenditure of \$20,000 from land acquisition to the management of Bolson tortoise habitat at San Ignacio el Rancho, which was seconded by Michael Tuma, and unanimously approved.** ● The money would be delivered by Joe Probst immediately. ● For audit purposes, Kristin Berry will ask Eric Goode for a clarifying statement of purpose.

W. Bolson Tortoise Land Acquisition at Alamos, Sonora Mexico: After discussion, the following motion was made: **There was a motion made by Ken MacDonald, seconded by Kristin Berry, and unanimously approved to pledge \$20,000 to The Mexico Tortoise Project to acquire land at the Reserva Monte Mojino at Alamos, Sonora Mexico contingent on associated organizations acquiring at least \$150,000 and purchasing the lands; the pledge may be reconsidered if lands are not purchased within one year.**

W. Bren School Project Status: Michael Tuma has provided Chris Noddings with insightful comments on the outline. There is still a lot of work to be completed, here at the end of the third quarter. Chris Nodding will continue to distribute additional coordinating information.

X. Bylaws Revisions: The proposed revisions were distributed by Bruce Palmer prior to the meeting. These changes include defining the appointment for Board Member At Large positions (may actually serve for 2.5 years if they are appointed mid-year), addition of *Gopherus evgoodei*, and election procedures. **Maggie Fusari motioned that the Bylaws be accepted as presented, seconded by Pete Woodman, and unanimously approved.**

Y. Fund Raising Film: Ken MacDonald showed us a draft of the film. The film needs to have an updated map (**Kristin Berry will provide Ken with an updated map**); there's a line that needs to be changed from "endangered" to "threatened;" need to indicate that it is also the California state reptile; and the Todd Esque segment needs to be removed. Also need to reference the website so that donations can be made to this specific restoration project. **Ken MacDonald will work with Mary Cohen to insert a specific place on the website to make donations for this effort.** This film can be used in various forms at the Symposium (continuous loop at the Council's table and as part of the opening address), and provide an opportunity to make donations at the Symposium.

Z. Terms and Conditions BMPs: Ken MacDonald completed a draft several months ago and has received feedback from several Board members. Not further discussed today.

AA. Betty Burge Memorial: The expenditure of \$10,000 had been approved several years ago to establish this memorial fund at Springs Preserve. The budget item was approved above to facilitate this expenditure. **Ken MacDonald will take the lead on reinitiating this effort.**

BB. Set Future Meeting Dates: Bruce Palmer suggested that we meet in April so as not to have the wide span between February and June. The summer meeting will be June 10, 2016 in Ontario, CA at the DoubleTree Hilton.

W. Next Meeting: The next business meeting will be the Annual Business Meeting at 08:00 a.m. on the morning of 24 February 2017 at Sam's Town, Las Vegas, Nevada.

X. Adjourn: The meeting was adjourned by Chairperson, Bruce Palmer, at 16:30.

Draft minutes were recorded, later distributed and modified with Board member review and input, then approved in a formal vote, and now respectfully submitted as this final version by Ed LaRue, Recording Secretary.



Edward L. LaRue, Jr.
Desert Tortoise Council, Recording Secretary