

Final Final Final

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

**20 October 2012
DoubleTree Hilton, Ontario, California**

The meeting was called to order by Daniel Pearson 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: Pete Woodman, Maggie Fusari, Bruce Palmer, Glenn Stewart, Daniel Pearson, Kristin Berry, Mari Quillman, Tracy Bailey, Mike Bailey, Becky Jones, Joe Probst, Ed LaRue. **Absent:** Sid Silliman. **Guests:** Heidi McMaster.

Mari Quillman provided us with an excellent spread sheet showing all the board members, officers, etc. per year. **Mari Quillman and Ed LaRue will work together in Wrightwood to go through archival materials and fill in some of the blanks in her spread sheet.**

A. Introductions: Heidi McMaster was welcomed as a prospective board member. She is from Las Vegas, Nevada currently working for Bureau of Reclamation, soon to receive her master's degree. After brief discussion, **motion was made (Glenn Stewart), seconded (Joe Probst), and unanimously approved to accept Heidi McMaster as our newest board member.** We may ask her to help with electronic media and membership committee, serve on the host committee at the Symposium at Sam's Town, and assist the EAC. **Tracy Bailey will distribute her contact information.**

B. Review Agenda: No new issues were added to the draft agenda.

C. Meeting Minutes of 25 August 2012: Ed LaRue prepared minutes at the last board meeting at DoubleTree Hilton here in Ontario, which were distributed, reviewed, and approved with one minor change from Pete Woodman. **Motion made (Maggie Fusari), seconded (Bruce Palmer), and approved to accept the draft minutes as amended to be final.**

D. Reports:

1. Treasurer's Report: The Treasurer's Report was distributed by Mike Bailey. Our current balance is \$291,491.08, which reflects increased income from the workshops. Mike Bailey supplied Ed LaRue with the signed, final audit report, which Ed will maintain in official records. The Council's credit card has been increased from \$16,000 to \$50,000 to cover symposia and workshop expenses, with Mike Bailey and Dan Pearson as the names on the account. **The Council should pursue a second card, and perhaps have Kristin Berry hold it.** Mike Bailey needs a formal request along with associated receipts for reimbursements. Typically, travel costs are reimbursable, but not motel or meals; provide receipts for reimbursement (e.g., gas receipts). **Motion made (Becky Jones), seconded (Kristin Berry), and approved to accept the Treasurer's Report as final.**

2. Ecosystems Advisory Committee Report: Ed LaRue drafted the minutes to include the first two projects, which were later modified by Sid Silliman to the current version, including a total of four projects. The transition following Sid Silliman's departure as chairperson from the EAC has not been formalized. As several projects were revealed by various board members, Ed LaRue took the lead to draft letters and distribute them and will be responsible for drafting formal reports, but he is concerned that maybe not all projects are coming to his attention. How can we ensure this? **Tracy Bailey will begin to send information to him.** He will take the lead on producing comment letters, distributing them to the EAC, then for controversial projects, sending them to the entire board. He may prompt the EAC to scrutinize certain issues, and will definitely delegate out certain regional issues to pertinent members. **There was a top ten priority list of issues that the Council would comment on, which members will try to get to him.** The chairperson (currently Dan Pearson) would be signatory when the EAC chairperson cannot sign a letter due to conflicts. **Peter Woodman asked that he be consulted for Arizona projects.** There was no formal vote, but there was a consensus that Ed LaRue function as the EAC Chairperson.

1. Rio Mesa Solar Project Transmission: This was a BLM scoping letter, so we asked that the Council be considered an Affected Party to be included in future environmental documents. No maps were available with the scoping letter, so we emphasized it should not affect critical habitats or DWMAs.

2. BLM Tortoise Translocation EA for Southern Nevada: Several EAC members wrote a strongly worded letter contesting BLM's intent to release a thousand or more tortoises out to 175 kilometers from the Desert Tortoise Conservation Center (DTCC) throughout southern Nevada. Sixty tortoises were recently released from the DTCC by San Diego Zoo (Jennifer Germano) onto the Yucca Mountain Test Site, apparently without an Environmental Assessment. Council should draft a letter supporting the continued function of the DTCC to contain tortoises and their offspring removed from construction sites, reiterating that captives should not be released. The DTCC became more of a research facility than a captive population center when DTRO interceded several years ago. Managers should consider sterilizing tortoises to prevent reproduction among captives.

Should the Council work with other environmental groups to continue to comment to BLM on this issue? As an affected party, we should receive a copy of the FONSI when available. **Ed LaRue will contact Ilene Anderson, and may need to call the BLM contact and ask about the process, where it is, and be sure the Council maintains our position to continue to comment. Bruce Palmer, Peter Woodman, and Dan Pearson will craft a letter on the DTCC.** The EA final decision FONSI is expected the end of November 2012. Individual members are encouraged to submit independent letters on this issue. **Ed LaRue will resubmit Council comments, and emphasize that we want to be included on all future decisions (like extending the comment period) as an affected party, and need to know as decisions are being made.**

3. Cadiz Pipeline: See EAC report (attached) for summary.

4. Silver State South and Las Vegas RMA Plan: See EAC report (attached) for summary.

5. DRECP: The independent science panel assessment of the DRECP was made public and distributed to Council members in September 2012. The panel concluded that the draft plan is not scientifically defensible.

6. CDFG to CDFW: Becky Jones shared that California Department of Fish and Game is formally changing its name to California Department of Fish and Wildlife in January 2013.

E. Discussions:

1. Awards Committee: Glenn Stewart reported that Morafka Award announcements have been forwarded to several newsletters and is on a link on the Council webpage. Proposals should be submitted to him in pdf format by 3 December 2012, to be shared with Bob Murphy and Ken Nagy, the other two members overseeing this award. Kristin Berry and Becky Jones are the other two award committee members. There have been no recommendations for other awards. **Board members are requested to submit nominations for the committee's consideration.** Glenn Stewart would like to have the list of nominations complete for consideration at the January board meeting. He spoke with Jim St Amant in early September and recently provided Jim's contact information in an email. Jim expressed his appreciation that the Special Award has now been named after him. Daniel Pearson recommended that a special format of the 2013 Special Award with a framed letter and photograph be presented to Jim St Amant, which met with approval. It would likely have to be presented personally, as Jim may not be able to travel. **Peter Woodman will check to see if he has any Council belt buckles.** Kristin Berry suggested that Eric Goode be considered for a Special Award for his work with Bolson tortoises. Becky Jones suggested Ray Butler for the Pat Von Helf Award in 2013. Kristin will present the Robert C. Stebbins Research Award to Taylor Edwards.

2. 2013 Symposium Report: Kristin Berry distributed "call for papers" and "guidelines for authors" to about 50 individuals. Roy Averill-Murray has asked for four or five slots. Other invited speakers are Andrew Walde (**Peter Woodman will contact him**) and Dr. Ferrara, among others. Dan Pearson will present the year in review, summarizing Council accomplishments in 2012. Becky Jones will chair the government session. Major sessions may include energy, government, anthropogenic impacts, Arizona session (three papers according to Christina Jones), Dick Tracy and his students have been invited, social behavior, Henderson group, and maybe one on subsidized predators (ravens, dogs, etc.). **Becky Jones will check with Clarence Everley to see if any Fort Irwin-funded researchers would like to present their results. Heidi McMaster will pursue some of her contacts in Nevada.** Not sure if Bryan Cypher, who received significant sums of money to study predators at Fort Irwin, has anything to report at this time. Would be relevant to have a session on releasing captive tortoises into the wild (see EAC report), since they are considering closing the DTCC. There have been no poster ideas presented at this time. No recent book authors have been identified at this time. Glenn Stewart has made arrangements for several student volunteers to work the symposium.

Mari Quillman cited Kent Beaman as someone who has very creative approaches to getting sponsorships. Joe Probst recommended more "big stuff" and less "little stuff" for the raffle. We will discuss providing individual board members with money to purchase raffle items in January. **Ray Butler will provide the shot glasses for the tequila auction.** Be sure that there are quality items in *both* the raffle and auction. **Both Maggie Fusari and Daniel Pearson will seek good raffle/auction items,** although there was no formal vote to provide them with a budget at this meeting. We could approach companies and individuals to see if they will sponsor or provide items for the raffle, which **will require a formal letter, tax identification number, etc., which will be developed and implemented by Mari Schroeder, Tracy Bailey, and Heidi McMaster.** What about vendors and artists? The symposium usually does not have a large enough crowd to support most vendors. **Heidi McMaster will help Mari Quillman with local Nevada vendors. Joe Probst will manage the photo contest, and provide an announcement to Tracy Bailey to post on the website.**

Mari Quillman would like to pursue some marketing techniques through advertising, sponsorships, etc. We may place Council link on other groups' websites such as Center for North American Herpetology, Wildlife Society, Tucson Ecological Society, etc. As Corresponding Secretary, Tracy Bailey with Kristin Berry's help can provide Mari Quillman draft wording to appear on other websites. Some groups will provide their mailing lists, which may require the Council to share ours. In the past, we do not share our mailing list. Use the 2012 workshop to advise people either in writing or via emails reminding them of the symposium. This year the Council has received donations of \$500 from ECORP and \$1,000 from Southern California Edison supporting the symposium. Joe Probst will work with Mari Quillman to develop a means to encourage and acquire donations and sponsors, which they will provide to the rest of the board for input. The approach should define contributors versus sponsors, etc. The opportunity to provide donations and sponsorship should be published on the webpage.

Tracy Bailey reported that everything is on track for Sam's Town between 15 and 17th February 2013. Tracy Bailey will set up the board meeting for 12 January 2013, which is traditional to have the meeting at the Symposium location. • Maggie Fusari will contact Roy Averill-Murray to attend the January board meeting. • Tracy Bailey will ensure registration information for the Symposium will be up and running in the next few weeks. Most people liked the food service last year, so Tracy Bailey would use the same approach in 2013.

3. Web Site Discussion/Progress: We have a signed contract with Mary Cohen at this time. Anything needing to be posted should be sent to Tracy Bailey, who will be the point contact to send things to Mary Cohen. Tracy Bailey is currently working on having the symposium registration online.

4. Council Board Operations Manual: Bruce Palmer is working on descriptions of different subgroups; currently working on the EAC. He continues to work on policy statements. He is working on a letter format for vendors to inform them how to participate at the symposium. Vendors are expected to register or provide a \$50 item for the raffle/auction, particularly if they take advantage of food offered at breaks.

5. Council Symposium Manual: Tracy Bailey is still working on the manual, and will likely have it complete sometime after the 2013 symposium.

6. Council Workshop: All three workshops are currently full, with 110 students per session. Agency personnel are having the most difficulty in getting payment to the Council from their agencies. We may give them the option to pay afterwards to accommodate this difficulty. Maggie Fusari will not be there, so Tracy Bailey will fill in for her. She has sufficient volunteers to run everything, particularly registration. We will be reimbursing support staff, as needed and requested. The Council will provide motel (estimated at \$100/night) and travel expense – both requiring receipts – and provide per diem at \$30/day.

Maggie Fusari feels strongly that we need to eliminate the repetitive speaker situation, but stay with or expand the field component. Kerr-McGee Center is large enough to accommodate the three or four hundred people in attendance but field logistics are problematic. We would then need to seek external catering. Large classes also detract from one-on-one interactions with instructors. Most people don't like the idea of having the class and field exercises as separate events, perhaps in widely-spaced locations. We should emphasize finding tortoise sign and field-based work; really reconsider the program and what is needed. Maggie Fusari is interfacing with Roy Averill-Murray to see what USFWS wants from our workshop training. Given all the above, more instructors seems to be one of the best answers. Another approach is consider having the workshop two different times a year, perhaps in November and again in March, for example. Maggie Fusari emphasized that a pertinent group of people get together or perhaps have a conference call to discuss existing and new formats and revised approaches.

7. Discussions with Roy Averill-Murray: The Recovery Implementing Teams (RITs) are meeting through December, so Roy will not be available until January 2013. He has indicated to Maggie Fusari that USFWS expects our workshops to train people in general skills, with USFWS continuing to oversee specific skills like blood sampling, health assessments, etc. Important to talk to Roy Averill-Murray about any future plans for providing workshops relative to the Morafka desert tortoise. **Maggie Fusari will provide Dan Pearson with Roy's email contact information so he can invite him to the January meeting.** Bruce Palmer would like to discuss the listing package for the Morafka desert tortoise at this meeting as an additional topic, but most agreed that the field techniques workshop should be the main subject.

8. Spring Preserve/Betty Burge Memorial: Kristin Berry has been working on this issue, and asked the Preserve about the status of the memorial. Not much has been done. Her contact said he will have a proposed plan available at our next board meeting in January.

9. Symposium Proceeding Abstracts: Maggie Fusari discussed problems with accessing the abstracts on the available CD. She is not sure what copyright issues may affect the use of the abstracts and Proceedings. She would like to see the CD's simplified to have only the abstract information available. Fon Duke is the person who produced the current CD's. Kristin Berry suggested that we have Fon Duke provide written instructions for how to access the Proceedings. Some feel that the Proceedings should be made available on the website for free. **Motion made (Maggie Fusari), seconded (Peter Woodman), and unanimously approved to have the Proceedings and abstracts from the CD posted on the website for free.**


10. Other Items:

(a) Recovery Implementation Teams (RITs). Maggie Fusari recently met on her RIT for the northeastern Mojave, where there were 10 members in attendance to look at action items. Members indicated their priorities, but no real feeling that anything is getting done. Some discussions on specific issues were ambivalent, with equal support for or against a given management activity; innocuous actions like education or habitat restoration were accepted, but controversial issues did not receive consensus support. RITs were not given an opportunity to add new management actions to the list provided by USFWS. Geothermal was identified as a top threat, over and above solar, although it is only in the Coso Range in the West Mojave. Need to address tortoise mortality, which is not being done.

F. Next Meeting: The next business meeting of the board will be at Sam's Town, Las Vegas, NV, between 10:00 a.m. and approximately 4:00 p.m., on 12 January 2013.

G. Adjourn: The meeting was adjourned by Chairperson, Dan Pearson, at 4:06 p.m.

These final minutes were recorded and respectfully submitted by Ed LaRue, Recording Secretary.



Ecosystems Advisory Committee Report
DTC Board Meeting of 20 October 2012

Rio Mesa Solar Project Transmission

8 September 2012 - Ed LaRue drafted a scoping comment letter (C:/DTC/Comment Letters/Rio Mesa Solar Project Transmission.9-8-2012) with concerns about placement and continued Council involvement. After EAC review (Glenn Stewart on 9/8, Joe Probst 9/10, Bruce Palmer on 9/11), the letter was emailed and sent via postal service to the BLM Palm Springs office on 13 September 2012.

BLM Tortoise Translocation EA for Southern Nevada

8 September 2012 – Ed LaRue began drafting a comment letter (C:/DTC/Comment Letters/Southern Nevada Tortoise Translocation EA.9-14-2012) expressing serious concern about the proposal to dump captive tortoises throughout southern Nevada, including wilderness areas. After EAC review (Joe Probst on 9/10, Glenn Stewart on 9/12, Bruce Palmer on 9/12, Kristin Berry 9/12) the letter was emailed and sent via postal service to the BLM Las Vegas office on 13 September 2012

Cadiz

1 October – Sid attended the San Bernardino County Board of Supervisor’s special meeting to review the Cadiz project’s groundwater management plan. Many rose to speak against the Cadiz project. The Board voted 4 to 1 for the County to sign off on the proponent’s plan to monitor the aquifer.

Silver State South and Las Vegas RMA Plan

12 October - Notice of Availability of the Draft Supplemental EIS for the Silver State Solar South Project and Proposed Las Vegas Field Office Resource Management Plan Amendment published in the Federal Register. Access the Draft SEIS on the BLM Southern Nevada District Office web page at: http://www.blm.gov/nv/st/en/fo/lvfo/blm_programs/energy.html

The ACEC depicted in the Draft SEIS and the Resource Management Plan Amendment is considerably different than the ACEC proposed by Desert Tortoise Council, Basin and Range Watch, and Desert Protective Council. The Resource Management Plan protest is likely to permit a protest and an administrative review of such protest.

Silver State Solar South site is east of Primm, north of the California/Nevada boundary.