

Final Final Final

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

**12 January 2013
Sam's Town, Las Vegas, Nevada**

The meeting was called to order by Chairperson Dan 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: Dan Pearson, Mari Quillman, Peter Woodman, Maggie Fusari, Joe Probst, Bruce Palmer, Glenn Stewart, Becky Jones, Kristin Berry, Tracy Bailey, Mike Bailey, Heidi McMaster, Ed LaRue. **Absent:** None. **Guests:** Roy Averill-Murray, Mickey Quillman.

A. Introductions: Roy Averill-Murray with U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service (USFWS) was introduced as our invited guest.

B. Review Agenda: Several new issues were added and incorporated below.

C. Meeting Minutes of 20 October 2012: Ed prepared minutes at the last board meeting at Ontario, California, which were distributed, reviewed, and approved. Several changes were made earlier in the week to address comments by Glenn Stewart. **Motion made (Kristin Berry), seconded, and approved to accept the draft minutes as presented to be final.**

D. Reports:

1a. USFWS-Council Coordination on Workshops: Roy Averill-Murray is here, among other things, to coordinate education efforts between USFWS and the Council, particularly with regards to our Workshop. Roy is the lead for the USFWS Desert Tortoise Recovery Office (DTRO), which was created about eight years ago. DTRO regularly works with the many USFWS field offices to coordinate tortoise issues, including training. Ray Bransfield will likely continue to be an important USFWS resource as an instructor at the Workshop. There is broad USFWS consensus and endorsement that the Workshop is useful as an introductory course. It is appropriate that we continue to indicate that the Workshop is not a certification, which is required for some species in several states.

USFWS has been training individual biologists to perform health assessments and several other activities for several years. These classes are also not certifications, but do identify participating individuals as “qualified.” Range-wide monitoring (distance sampling) is another workshop USFWS conducts using styrotorts; the handbook is on their website. USFWS has also discussed presenting new modules (e.g., biology versus regulation), which could include desert tortoise handling and processing. Bruce Palmer reiterated that “handling” is a misnomer in the title of the Workshop; that it is more an introduction to performing surveys, not a class on how to handle tortoises. Modules may be a means to authorize individuals on specific actions, like handling.

Dan Pearson suggested assembling a committee comprised of USFWS, state resource agencies, and the Council to discuss new training scenarios. Roy suggested that two or three people from USFWS would be appropriate (Ray Bransfield has expressed an interest). Council volunteers include Maggie Fusari (chairperson), Pete Woodman, and Heidi McMaster. Kristin Berry offered to help as needed, and as incoming Chairperson, Bruce Palmer is an ex-officio member of all committees. Becky Jones is willing to serve as the California Department of Wildlife (new name for California Department of Fish and Game as of January 2013) representative. Other potential representatives may include Jason Jones with Nevada Department of Wildlife and Larry LaPre with Bureau of Land Management in California. Consensus that the 2013 fall workshop may be slightly modified, with no major overhaul to make it more than introductory. Dan Pearson suggested that it would be good to have feedback from this committee by the 1 June 2013 board meeting.

1b. Desert Tortoise Conservation Center (DTCC): Kristin Berry asked Roy Averill-Murray to summarize concerns with the DTCC, which will run out of money by the end of 2014. The DTCC is solely supported by BLM mitigation money in Nevada, and BLM does not want to manage this facility. Roy has been working across state boundaries to garner financial support for the DTCC and to eliminate the perception of a “pet tortoise sanctuary.” Roy suggests that agencies use the center as the focal training center for health assessments, for range-wide monitoring, miscellaneous applied research, and education. Clark County has disavowed any responsibility with these captive tortoises, even though they were removed under authority of the multi-species habitat conservation plan. DTCC’s current operating budget is about one million dollars per year. There have been as many as 4,000 tortoises, now about 1,800, and the targeted population is about 500, which should cost much less than one million dollars/year to maintain.

Roy asked several months ago if the Council would be willing to provide a letter endorsing the importance of the DTCC. He now thinks that a letter may not have much effect in the absence of funding. He suggested that funding may come from the renewable energy industry, and necessarily cross state lines from the Desert Renewable Energy Conservation Plan effort; there is not much renewable energy money locally in Clark County. There is a current project at the University of Georgia to research sterilization of both male and female tortoises.

1c. Ex-officio Representation by USFWS on Board: This USFWS biologist would attend Board meetings and serve to advance agendas of both organizations. Roy Averill-Murray indicated that he, personally, may not be able to commit. He asked that the Council provide a letter to USFWS describing how this position may function. Dan Pearson will draft this letter and share it with Bruce Palmer before providing it to USFWS.

2. Treasurer’s Report: The Treasurer’s Report was distributed in the past week or so, showing about \$220,000 in the bank. Mike Bailey will work with Ray Butler and Joe Probst next month on the audit. Motion made, seconded, and approved to accept the Treasurer’s Report as final.

3. Ecosystems Advisory Committee Report: The report is attached, so many of the project-specific considerations are included in the attachment. Ed LaRue will ask Sid Silliman to email EAC reports for 2012 to Dan Pearson so Dan can summarize EAC activities at the Symposium.

a. BLM Tortoise Translocation EA for Southern Nevada: This letter, as given in the report was submitted to the BLM in September 2012. Roy Averill-Murray indicated that a final decision may be issued in early February 2013. This will be a revised, updated document that addresses comments, including the Council's concerns that pet tortoises would be released into wild populations. An attachment to the revised environmental assessment would describe the initial translocation effort. The first release would be between Las Vegas and Pahrump, called "Trout Canyon," north of Blue Diamond Highway, which has been fenced. Surveys were conducted in 2008, showing a reduced population. Most of the tortoises to be released are of unknown origin, though some are from Pahrump. Only five tortoises are from out of state, which would not be released in Nevada. The number of releases will consider density restrictions identified in the Recovery Plan. There may be 800-900 tortoises released into more than 700 square kilometers at this location. Roy indicated that monitoring would be essential and should be long-term.

b. DRECP: Kristin Berry indicated that the Draft DRECP plan is expected to be out in March 2013 and will require review and comment by the Council.

c. Washington County Parkway: Bruce Palmer indicated the comment letter was deficient and misrepresented contents of the consultant's report. Bruce indicated that the Board needs to further consider the Council's advocacy role. It would have been better for Ed LaRue to discuss this issue with Bruce before sending out the document. The letter asked that the Council be considered an Affected Party for this project, so there should be future opportunities to comment.

EAC's function is an important consideration. How best to represent board position, as opposed to any one individual. Currently, Ed LaRue is receiving information from Tracy Bailey, Sid Silliman, and miscellaneous other organizations (Seth Shteir of National Parks Conservation Association). Ed will continue to report members who have and have not commented on given issues, as a means of documenting board involvement. *Importantly, Dan Pearson recommended sending out comment letters to all board members and not publish the letter until at least three board members have responded, which met with board consensus.* It is necessary to get feedback from any members who have a personal knowledge of a given project before sending out a letter. **Bruce Palmer will write up the intended function of the EAC, and send it to Ed LaRue before sending it to the entire board.**

E. Discussions:

1. Awards Committee: Glenn Stewart indicated that there were three applications submitted to the committee for the Morafka Award (Bob Murphy and Ken Nagy are other members on the committee). The winner was Michael Tuma from University of Southern California, "Life History Variation in Agassiz's Desert Tortoises." Other awards will be Eric Goode for the James A. St. Amant Special Award (presented by Kristin Berry); Ray Butler for the Pat von Helf Recognition Award (presented by Dan Pearson); Glenn R. Stewart Service Awards to Alice Karl, Paul Frank (both presented by Pete Woodman), and California Turtle and Tortoise Club (CTTC) chapters (presented by Kristin Berry who will arrange a recipient, possibly Mary Cohen). Taylor Edwards will receive the Robert C. Stebbins Research Award (presented by Kristin Berry). The Kristin Berry Annual Award will go to Bruce Palmer (presented by Glenn Stewart). **Mari Quillman continues to update the awards spreadsheet, and will add these latest recipients to this spread sheet.**

2. 2013 Symposium Report: Kristin Berry circulated the tentative speakers list for the Symposium. She provided some discussion about the intended speakers, which are not fully reiterated herein. There were three or four student papers; several on head-starting; three on subsidized predators; others on disease and translocation; group on tortoise population sampling; and DTCC. There are five or six potential posters. **Joe Probst will manage the photo contest again this year.** Photographs are given to Joe at the Symposium, so he does not receive any in advance. **Kristin Berry made a motion that Sylvia Morafka be given a lifetime reimbursement for registration costs, seconded (Dan Pearson), and unanimously approved.**

Tracy Bailey indicated that the menu and schedules would remain the same as last year. **Our second deposit is due next week, which Mike Bailey will handle.** Mari Quillman has done a great job on obtaining donors, sponsors, and announcing the Symposium in various ways. She suggests sponsorship levels as follows: individual contributors (\$25 to \$100), bronze (\$250), silver (\$500), gold (\$750), and platinum donors (more than \$1,000). She recommended that sponsors be identified in the program, acknowledged on slides during breaks, and identified several times during the Symposium; may also place higher-level sponsors on a poster at the banquet. **Mari Quillman will coordinate with Mary Cohen to see that sponsors are identified on the website.** Thanks to Mari and Heidi McMaster for identifying vendors. **Bruce Palmer provided a draft write-up describing vendor involvement, which he will email to Mari.** Mari produced flyers announcing the Symposium that she distributed to universities, professional organizations, herpetological societies, etc. Finally, she also provided the Symposium announcement via “Linked-in” to her professional contacts.

Mari Quillman also worked diligently on raffle, auction, and donation items. The top auction item will likely be a resort location in Montana. There are also a deep sea diving expedition, professional photographs, etc. She and Heidi McMaster are still pursuing other items and events, which may include a helicopter trip over the Grand Canyon. Mari’s solicitation for donors is already posted on the webpage. **Mari plans on contacting last year’s donors to see if they want to make donations again this year.** Ray Butler will be bringing shot glasses and tequila. **Motion made (Kristin Berry), seconded (Joe Probst), and approved to provide up to \$200 to Maggie Fusari, \$500 to Dan Pearson, \$200 to Heidi McMaster, and \$200 to Mari Quillman for additional raffle and auction items. Please be sure to keep receipts and provide them to Mike Bailey.**

3. 2013 Workshop: Maggie Fusari provided a write-up several days ago about the 2012 Workshop and planning for the 2013 Workshop. Registration will be fully on-line this year. Tracy Bailey has reserved Spring Hill Suites in Ridgecrest, California for November 2-3 and 4-5 2013, so only two sessions anticipated. There was a general consensus that we would not have a third session, even if 100 people are on the waiting list after the first two sessions are full. Tracy Bailey gave the liability waivers and other official papers to Ed LaRue who will maintain them.

4. Aaron Micallef with Springs Preserve: Aaron made a presentation concerning developing a memorial for Betty Burge at the Springs Preserve. He hopes to have the memorial completed in about May 2013. His proposal for the “backyard tortoise habitat,” consisting of five pages, was distributed. There would be signs, landscaping, created habitats, and a plaque honoring Betty Burge. He is also considering making some or all of the educational materials bilingual. **Kristin Berry will work with Aaron to develop all wording associated with the memorial.** Kristin recommended that Aaron provide all proposals to someone at the Tortoise Group and to Roy Averill-Murray (as USFWS representative) so they may provide feedback. In previous discussions, the Council discussed about \$10,000 for Betty’s memorial. Aaron’s estimated cost, excluding production of the plaque, which depends on size, is given as \$13,500. He indicated that Springs Preserve has available money, and will cover the difference.

5. 2014 Symposium: The Board has decided to have the 20-23 February 2014 Symposium at DoubleTree Hotel in Ontario, California. Tracy Bailey has contract in place.

6. Arizona Workshop: Bruce Palmer indicated he'd like to start a new committee to consider developing a workshop in anticipating the listing of the Morafka desert tortoise. As the members from Arizona, Bruce and Maggie Fusari would be members on this committee.

7. Elections and Re-elections: It being an odd year, we need to vote on Recording Secretary (Ed LaRue) and Membership Coordinator (Mari Quillman). Joe Probst agreed to serve as Chairperson-elect. As Corresponding Secretary, Tracy Bailey will oversee the elections since the Recording Secretary would be elected this year. Dan Pearson will move into the position of Past Chairperson.

8. Newsletter: Tracy Bailey will contact Sean Daly in the next week-or-so to determine when the next newsletter will be published. Maggie Fusari would like to provide important Workshop information, not yet finalized, in the newsletter.

9. Website: Tracy Bailey indicated Mary Cohen plans to be finished with the website by early February, to be ready for the Symposium. Motion made (Joe Probst), seconded (Maggie Fusari), and approved to provide transportation, room, and Symposium cost for Mary Cohen so she can be here to present information on the webpage, and perhaps also receive the CTTC Special Award.

10. Board Operations Manual: Bruce Palmer continues to work on defining policies of the Council, which has been completed for some positions. Bruce would like the Board to consider the following policies: categories of membership (Mari Quillman); grants and funding (Dan Pearson); awards (Glenn Stewart); reimbursement policy (Mike Bailey); officer responsibilities and function of EAC (Bruce Palmer); and recusal process (Ed LaRue). Bruce Palmer will email a format for developing these policies. Each member identified above should have a draft available by the 1 June 2013 board meeting.

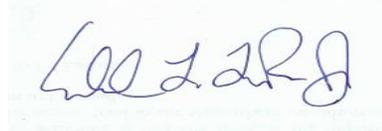
11. Membership Data Base: Ed LaRue provided Mari Quillman with materials that will allow her to determine awardees for those years she was missing. Tracy Bailey indicated Sean Daly suggested buying a Council computer, which would be used by him, Mari Quillman, and likely a third user. Mari Quillman is looking at computers for the Council, which would include the membership data base. Mari Quillman will coordinate with Mary Cohen to see which materials should be included on this computer. Motion made (Kristin Berry), seconded (Joe Probst), and approved for Mari Quillman to spend up to \$1,500 for the computer, back-up drive, etc.

12. Desert Report: There was a past Board decision to provide money to the Sierra Club to publish the Desert Report. So, Mike Bailey will send the Sierra Club \$3,000 for this existing commitment.

F. Next Meeting: The next meeting of the Board will be the Annual Business Meeting on Friday morning, 15 February 2013, at 08:00 to 09:00 a.m. here at Sam's Town. The next board meeting following the Symposium will be 1 June 2013 in Ontario, California at DoubleTree Hotel.

G. Adjourn: The meeting was adjourned by Chairperson, Dan Pearson, at 15:45.

Draft minutes were recorded, later distributed and modified with board member review and input, then respectfully submitted as this final version by Ed LaRue, Recording Secretary.



Ecosystems Advisory Committee Report
DTC Board Meeting of 12 January 2013

BLM Tortoise Translocation EA for Southern Nevada

20 October 2012 – During today's board meeting it was discovered that the comment period for this project was extended on 26 September to 31 October 2012. Having not been notified of this extension, the board consensus was to resubmit the comments sent on 13 September 2012 (C:/DTC/Comment Letters/Southern Nevada Tortoise Translocation EA.9-14-2012) expressing our concern that we were not notified about the extension. Ed LaRue responded by resubmitting the comment letter on 20 October 2012 with an email emphasizing we expect to be contacted for future developments. Ed also sent an email to Ilene Anderson seeing how we may assist the Center for Biological Diversity in pursuing this issue.

Mojave National Preserve Water Resource Management Plan

28 October 2012 – Ed LaRue forwards a brochure to EAC that outline alternatives for the plan, and attached our comments from last summer. We have until 20 November 2012 to provide written comments. Comments received from Glenn (10/30). Ed circulates comment letter on 14 November 2012 for EAC input. After receiving comments from Maggie Fusari, Kristin Berry, Mari Quillman, Joe Probst, and Heidi McMaster (all on 11/14) comments were emailed at 1530 on the afternoon of 14 November 2012 to NPS link given on the brochure and at the top of the comment letter.

Sun Valley to Morgan 500/230 kV Transmission Line Project and Proposed Resource Management Plan Amendment

29 November 2012 – Receive notice on this project north of Phoenix, Arizona from Tracy Bailey. Ed LaRue forwards to notice to all EAC members within several days, asking for input from particularly Pete Woodman and Maggie Fusari, as Arizona expertise. As of 3 January 2013, there has been no feedback on this issue.

Council endorsement of Congressman Raul Grijalva as incoming Secretary of the Interior?

3 December 2012 – In response to a request from Ilene Anderson of the Center for Biological Diversity, Ed LaRue polled the board to see if we should add the Desert Tortoise Council to a list of environmental organizations supporting his appointment. The following tallies were received: Those voting yes: Maggie Fusari, Glenn Stewart, Ed LaRue, Joe Probst, Mike Bailey, Pete Woodman, Bruce Palmer, Mari Quillman, Dan Pearson. Those abstaining: Kristin Berry and Heidi McMaster (as DOI employees), Tracey Bailey, Becky Jones. Those not responding before the deadline: Sid Silliman. After receiving concurrence from Dan Pearson, on 5 December 2012 at 13:30, Ed LaRue sent an email to Bill Snape of Center for Biological Diversity that the Council is willing to be added to the endorsement list.

Stateline Solar Development by First Solar Development

5 December 2012 – Receive notice of public meeting to be held on 10 January 2013 in Barstow. Ed LaRue distributes the notice to EAC members the same day, along with letter drafted by Sid Silliman on 13 September 2011 already commenting on the proposed project. On 5 December 2012, Mari Quillman recused herself from commenting as her company did some of the work on this project. As of 3 January 2013 there has been no response from the EAC.

Stakeholder meeting on Soda Mountains Solar

5 December 2012 – Ed LaRue receives phone call from Seth Shteir (NPCA) and email from Sid Silliman announcing this stakeholder meeting next Wednesday, 12 December 2012 from 4 to 6 p.m. Ed asked Seth to send links to environmental documents should prearranged field work interfere. Following a site visit by Ed and Mike Radakovich, Ed and Sid attend the scoping meeting in Lenwood on 12 December 2012. On 13 December 2012, Ed drafts scoping comments and circulates them to EAC plus Pete Woodman and Kristin Berry. No comments were received from EAC members by 14:00 on 14 December 2012, so Ed emails the letter to BLM (Jeffery Childers) to make the deadline. Glenn Stewart and Mari Quillman later responded that they were not available to comment before the deadline.

Note: Reimbursable items for field visit to this project site = \$137.70 Baker motel for LaRue and Radakovich; \$55.50 gas for LaRue; and \$40.00 gas for Radakovich; total = \$233.20.

Washington County Parkway

18 December 2012 – Ed LaRue receives a news article (“Study: new road could protect endangered tortoise”) referring to a study, dated September 2012, in which consultants suggest mitigation money from constructing a new highway through Red Cliffs Desert Reserve in Washington County, Utah could help implement the HCP protective measures elsewhere within the reserve. Ed drafted a comment letter that was distributed to the EAC on 18 December 2012. Glenn Stewart (12/19), Joe Probst (12/20) were those responding. Hearing nothing from anyone else, Ed emailed the comment letter to BLM (Richard Spotts) and the newspaper writer (David DeMille), ccing the rest of the board on 21 December 2012.

On 3 January 2013 receive email from Bruce Palmer that he is resigning from the board over this letter. Later that morning, David DeMille of the newspaper called to ask about the letter. Ed did tell him that it represented only three members’ review, and that it probably reflected more his opinion than that of the entire Council. On 7 January 2013, Bruce rescinds his resignation.

Desert Renewable Energy Conservation Plan (DRECP)

18 December 2012 – Ed LaRue receives DRECP’s email regarding “Description and Comparative Evaluation of Draft DRECP Alternatives,” which Ed reviews. Afterwards, Ed spends time reviewing the November 2012 Final Independent Science Panel Report. Ed has not recently been active in terms of attending public meetings or providing comments on behalf of the Council. This is partially due to Kristin Berry’s involvement on the independent scientific panel, the Council is not an Affected Party, and time constraints. The level of complexity and information is sufficiently overwhelming that it would require more time than Ed has, and the Affected Parties already include all major environmental groups functioning in tortoise habitats.

Oversight and Implementation Plan – Renewable Energy Coordination Office

31 December 2012 – Ed LaRue receives a one-page memo and a two page attachment describing BLM’s policy to facilitate processing of renewable energy applications. There are no action items associated with this memo, which Ed circulates to the rest of the board.

Quartzite Solar Energy Project, Final EIS

4 January 2013 – Tracy Bailey sends this notice to Ed LaRue. There is no action to be taken as this is a final EIS.

Four Former Firing Ranges at Lake Meade National Recreation Area

4 January 2013 – Ed LaRue receives this questionnaire from Tracy Bailey. On 6 January, Ed asks for Dan Pearson’s input, as the letter is addressed to him. Tracy responds and Ed concurs on 7 January that this is probably not a pertinent issue for board comment.