

Final Final Final

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

**25 September 2011
Doubletree Motel, Ontario, California**

The meeting was called to order by Maggie Fusari 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: Becky Jones, Mike Bailey, Tracy Bailey, Kristin Berry, Bruce Palmer, Dan Pearson, Pete Woodman, Glenn Stewart, Maggie Fusari, Sid Silliman, Ed LaRue. **Absent:** Ray Saumure. **Guests:** Joe Probst. Tom Egan, who was our Products Manager, resigned in August.

A. Introductions: None.

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

C. Meeting Minutes of 25 June 2011: Ed produced minutes at the last board meeting, which were distributed and corrected as necessary. **Motion made (Maggie), seconded (Becky), and approved to accept the draft minutes as amended to be final.**

D. Brief Reports:

1. Treasurer's Report: Mike brought CD for Ray Butler who heads our audit committee. The Council now has an overall total of \$210,028.83. We pay for event insurance every two years, which is just under \$5,000 and covers the workshop and board activities. **Mike will ensure that Indian Wells Valley Water District is identified as additionally insured for the Workshop.** Mike moved \$5,000 into the Edwards Jones CD. Previous goal was to have \$70,000 in this fund as the "Rainy Day Fund," which will be the new title for the Edwards Jones CD. Available members will talk to Edward Jones in Ridgecrest during the Workshop. Board needs to develop a finance policy that can be presented to Edward Jones. **Kristin will ask DTPC to provide a copy of their finance policy for board review. Motion made (Dan), seconded (Kristin), and approved to put \$20,434.52 into the fund prior to the end of this year to bring the Rainy Day Fund up to \$70,000. Motion made (Dan), seconded (Bruce), and approved to accept the treasurer's report as submitted.**

2. Corresponding Secretary's Report & Archival Materials: Tracy contacted Fon Duke about archival materials to see if he can scan them, which would cost about three cents per page with additional costs for titles; Michael Conner would help. This would cost about \$120 for 4,000 pages, plus title costs. Agreed it would be best to sort through these materials, eliminate redundancies, and scan in the rest. Bruce's revised Bylaws could list materials that should be preserved. Kristin, Dan, and Ed all have materials; Dan's garage was identified as an available place to evaluate materials, but not good the remainder of this year; maybe January through March, to be identified as an agenda item in January. **Maggie will check with Violet Nakayama about legal need to maintain Workshop waivers, hard copies or electronic versions. Dan, Ed, and Tracy will discuss archival materials among themselves and bring back recommendations in January.**

3. Recording Secretary's Report: Ed provided April and June minutes in July, receiving comments from only Glenn. This agenda item will be removed from future agendas.

4. Awards Committee: Announcements of the Morafka Award have now been published on the Council's webpage, by the Center for North American Herpetology (CNAH), and the Society for the Study of Amphibians and Reptiles (SSAR). Wording for Pat Von Helf Award has been finalized. Official members of Awards Committee are Glenn, Becky, and (now) Kristin. Awardees are not usually finalized until January-February; [please send nominations to Glenn, who will distribute them to Becky and Kristin.](#) The committee should discuss the research award and have it finalized by November, which would allow Kristin to invite awardees as speaker(s) to the Symposium. Taylor Edwards and Bob Murphy with his coauthors were discussed. Multiple awards are OK.

5. Newsletter: Sean's newsletter timeline was emailed by Maggie. Can we use electronic media rather than newsletter to publish Bylaws changes and other materials relative to the Symposium? If they must be written, Bylaws and Symposium program could be mailed out in January. Bylaws say that Council members must be provided with revised Bylaws within 30 days of the Annual Business Meeting, so hard copy versus electronic versions both OK. [Maggie will work with Sean to make the Newsletter available electronically through a link.](#) Workshop attendees automatically receive electronic Newsletters. Agreed Council should not totally abandon hard copy Newsletters, which are naturally phasing out. Tracy maintains the current and past membership list. [Tracy will receive returned Newsletters from Sean one or two more times to try and track down absentee members; be sure that Sean announces in the Newsletter that hard copies are being phased out; and check to see who is and is not on the distribution list.](#)

E. Donation to Tortoise Group for Betty Burge: Betty passed away at age 79 in August with a memorial service on 10 September at the Springs Preserve in Nevada. The Tortoise Group website is an excellent resource for captive tortoises. Members suggested that the Council consider making a donation or producing a memorial honoring Betty's contributions. [Kristin will develop a few specific alternatives \(donation to Tortoise Group, memorial plaque discussed\) that can be considered at a future board meeting.](#) [Maggie will help Kristin develop a presentation for the Symposium commemorating Betty, perhaps in the poster board room or as a presentation from the podium, maybe providing hard copies of some of her papers.](#)

F. Report from Eric Goode on Bolson Tortoise: Goode has recently considered possibility of purchasing Rancho San Ignacio, located about 200 miles west of Brownsville, to protect Bolson tortoise, sending several researchers to study tortoises, which were found. Bolson tortoises are being eaten, impacted by cattle grazing, and local drug entities threaten researchers. Not sure if Rancho San Ignacio is in the regional biosphere reserve. [Kristin would like the Council to financially support one or both of these student researchers to attend the Symposium.](#)

G. Roy Averill-Murray's reply to Murphy et al. 2010 and rebuttal: Roy wrote a draft article for Herpetological Review questioning that the reduction of the range for *G. agassizii* would require enhanced conservation measures. Murphy and coauthors were given a chance to respond, which they may not. Murphy *et al.* did not state that *G. agassizii* should be listed as endangered, which is one of Roy's assertions.

H. Society for Conservation Biology (SCB) Symposium: Maggie asked that the Council help identify folks to present at SCB's symposium to discuss alternatives to energy development that would not destroy habitats, with a November deadline for submittals. Wayne Spencer with DRECP was identified as a candidate, who would also know other potential speakers. May contact NRDC and CBD (Ilene Anderson), and focus on the history of recent politics that prompted the explosion of proposed development.

I. Handling Workshop update: Workshop is scheduled for 5, 6, 7, and 8 November 2011.

1. Current registration status: Plan to have two full Workshops, like last year. There have been about 470 inquiries with a 50 to 55% confirmed registration rate. We are 100% full for first event and near 80% for the second.

2. Future Workshop planning: Maggie would like Council members in attendance and as many speakers as possible to get together for dinner in Ridgecrest to discuss future Workshops. Bruce has unsuccessfully tried to contact Roy Averill-Murray to discuss their intent several years ago to have their own workshop. **Maggie will draft one or more letters, with input from others, to USFWS, BLM, and State resource agencies at the highest levels and field offices so we can avoid conflict and facilitate cooperation with others.** USFWS is already overseeing health profile training and is considering workshops teaching viral swabs, blood drawing, nasal lavage, and radio-telemetry. It may help if Ray Bransfield of Ventura USFWS can identify the "other" programs provided by USFWS during the Workshop and that the Council cites his participation and that of other agencies to show that this is a collaborative effort. Council could have Sid attend Desert Managers Group next month to facilitate this cooperation.

Tracy provided an email identifying other potential locations, including Kerr-McGee Center and Cerro Coso Junior College. Kristin suggested a half- or one-day refresher course for previous attendees as a form of recertification. **If Tracy sends electronic lists of previous attendees to Maggie, she will make a master list.** There will likely be fewer students in the future if (when) solar development subsides. Pete indicated we can accommodate 120 or 130 students in the field at the current site but not 200. Ed pointed out the water district has a second fenced site a half mile south on the same access road. The Marriott can accommodate not more than 120, which was uncomfortable.

3. Volunteers and compensation: May need to reimburse instructors, particularly State and federal personnel, given their financial limitations on travel. Most agreed compensation is available but volunteers are appreciated.

4. Testing logistics: Maggie indicates the current test needs editing. **Kristin, Glenn, and Tracy are willing to help Maggie edit the test, as necessary.**

J. Board member status, 2012 officers, and vacancies: We need to determine a slate of officers for nomination in January, and focus on how to fill vacancies.

K. Bylaws review: Bruce has done a wonderful job on revising the Bylaws! Major issues that were changed include officers, committees, proxy vote, and announcing board meetings; also a new objective, which is Article II, Section 2g. Both redline and final versions were provided. We then went through the Bylaws issue by issue. Not all changes are captured here; **Bruce took the definitive notes that will result in additional changes.** Article II, Section 2g allows for conservation of species other than the desert tortoise. The issues of advocacy, particularly of what, were discussed. Ask that wherever possible Bruce combine different sections. Annual dues are from Symposium to Symposium; so if you pay in June, you are a member through the next February. New wording should indicate the Symposium would be held in the first quarter. There was extensive discussion of board members versus elected officers; general membership attending board meetings; a quorum when 12 members are on the Board would be a minimum of seven; do we still want the Products Manager as an elected position? Should we include specific awards in bylaws? **Editorial and substantive comments must be submitted to Bruce by 15 November 2011 in order to have the final draft ready at the January board meeting.**

L. 2012 Symposium: The Symposium is scheduled for 17, 18, 19 February 2012 at Sam's Town in Las Vegas. **Kristin is coordinating with Sean to be sure that the Symposium is announced.**

1. Program speakers and needs: Kristin will invite Jenny Smith whose book, "Stolen World," has recently received critical acclaim about smuggling turtles and other taxa. Maggie feels strongly that the poster session should be expanded through use of assigned helpers. Jim Andre has indicated an interest in presenting a paper on solar energy. Mike indicated they would like to use a credit card machine for the auction, books, late payments, etc., which was accepted by the board.

2. Future locations: The Springs Preserve in Las Vegas can accommodate 250 people, with food service onsite. The banquet would need to be catered. Cost was \$800/day. But do not have associated motel, although some motels will shuttle them to the facility. This facility may be better for a future meeting place, maybe not Symposium.

M. Ecosystems Advisory Committee Report:

1. Report on EAC activities since June 2011: The draft EAC report was recently distributed.

- The Council provided comments on the *Desert Renewable Conservation Plan* (DRECP). Make sure DRECP implements and reconciles with Desert Tortoise Recovery Plan. The Council also stressed importance of protecting habitats, using the list of habitats created by Ray, Kristin, and others.

- The Council intervened on the *Ridgecrest Solar Power Project*. The upper levels of CEC are now reconsidering if photovoltaic projects should be under CEC purview, which some indicated has never denied a project. If CEC serves as the lead CEQA agency, it would streamline the process, which the energy industry sees as a major advantage.

- Ed recently provided comments on the *Mojave National Preserve*. Since Tom recently resigned, the Council needs to keep track of *route designation in the West Mojave Plan*. **Kristin asked that the EAC coordinate with Mary Kotschwar of the DTTPC on this issue.**

2. Ivanpah Valley: The solar facility at *Bright Source* is currently being constructed under the October 2010 biological opinion. It was temporarily stalled but construction resumed once the revised biological opinion was issued in June 2011. EAC recently commented on the *Stateline Solar Farm* as another facility currently being proposed, stating that a “Conservation Alternative” should be considered in the EIS for Stateline. The *Silver State North* project is a 500 acre site currently under construction; *Silver State South* is considering another site in Ivanpah Valley; both are located on the east side of I-15. There are about 7,000 acres being proposed for solar development. To address all this proposed solar development within the valley, Sid asks if the Council would endorse an ACEC in the Ivanpah Valley. Council agreed to endorse an ACEC in Ivanpah Valley, with Sid drafting a letter to be considered by the EAC. The *Desert Xpress* rail line is another proposed project through the valley, with a Record of Decision dated 7 July 2011 by the Federal Railroad Administration that would further fragment valley habitats.

3. Revised Desert Tortoise Recovery Plan: The revised Recovery Plan was released in July. PEER recently released a memorandum indicating that the revised Recovery Plan weakens management of firearm discharge in the Mojave National Preserve. The RITs (Recovery Implementation Teams) have yet to be identified, with several board members nominated to serve on RITs.

N. Updating functions of our web site: Some would like to see the webpage updated to be more attractive, updated, and include links and forms that will allow new registrations. Maggie will contact Mary Kotschwar of DTPC for information regarding their updated website.

O. Miscellaneous: None identified.

P. Next Meeting: Tracy will set up the Las Vegas location of the next board meeting, which is scheduled for Saturday, 7 January 2012.

L. Adjourn: Following a motion by Becky, seconded by Mike, the meeting was adjourned by Senior Co-Chairperson, Maggie Fusari, at 16:10.

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

Attachment 1. Ecosystem Advisory Committee report for 25 September 2011

**Ecosystems Advisory Committee Report
DTC Board Meeting of September 25, 2011**

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Desert Renewable Energy Conservation Plan (DRECP)

August 16 -- Ed LaRue attended the Ontario public scoping meeting regarding the joint Environmental Impact Statement/Environmental Impact Report (“EIS/EIR”) for the proposed DRECP and possible amendment of the CDCA Plan. September 12 – DTC scoping letter on EIS/EIR submitted to USFWS and CEC.

DesertXpress

In a Record of Decision dated July 7, 2011, Federal Railroad Administration approved the DesertXpress project. Segment 4C of the “Selected Alternative” will traverse desert tortoise habitat on north and east of the Clark Mountains (more or less west of Interstate 15).

Habitat Protection

July 24 – Kristin and Sid listed habitat to be protected by DTC. Ray will compile maps.

Mojave National Preserve

July 18 -- Ed attended the public meeting and submitted scoping comments to NPS on the Mojave National Preserve’s Water Resources Management Plan.

Ridgecrest Solar Power Project

July 6 -- DTC submitted a statement of opposition to a motion by Solar Trust of America (STA, formerly Solar Millennium) requesting a jurisdictional waiver that would allow CEC to certify a PV project at Ridgecrest under consideration by STA. July 25 – Sid participated in the CEC Committee hearing on the STA motion. On August 26, CEC issued a decision that the Commission (rather than the CEC Committee for RSPP) would consider the motion. CEC asked for additional briefing on the motion. STA, CEC staff, California State Association of Counties, several California Counties, CBD, Kerncrest Audubon, and Sierra Club filed briefs by the September 16 deadline. DTC elected not to file additional commentary due to limited legal expertise with respect to the jurisdictional waiver issue.

Stateline Solar Farm

September 16 – Scoping comments on an EIS for Stateline submitted to BLM. Stateline is a PV project proposed by First Solar for construction on some 2,000 acres of public land in the northern Ivanpah Valley adjacent to the ISEGS project on the northwest side of Inter-State 15.

Silver State South

Construction on Silver State North under way since Spring 2011. Scoping comments for a Supplemental EIS on Silver State South due October 31. Both projects are on the east side of the Ivanpah Valley.

Discussion and Possible Action Items

Ivanpah Valley
Revised Desert Tortoise Recovery Plan (2011)