

Final Final Final

Desert Tortoise Council Minutes of the Board of Directors Meeting

18 May 2024
Zoom Online Meeting

CALL TO ORDER

The meeting was called to order by Chairperson, Mari Quillman at 10:02 a.m. (PDT). **Action items are in blue, with responsible parties in red. Motions made, seconded, and approved (or not) are shown in bold red font.**

Attendees: Board members: Kristin Berry, Peter Woodman, Judy Hohman, Ken MacDonald, Mari Quillman, Michael Tuma, Becky Jones, Joe Probst, Ed LaRue, Max Havelka, Mary Lane Poe, Rick Applegate, Maggie Fusari, and Operations Manager: David Hedrick. **Absent:** Bruce Palmer, Luke Basulto, Halle Kohn-Levine, **Guests:** None.

A. Welcome/Announcements/Introductions: None.

B. Review Agenda: New issues were incorporated as needed.

C. Approval of Meeting Minutes of 30 March 2024: Ed LaRue prepared draft minutes of the most recent virtual Board meeting, which were distributed, reviewed, and approved today as final. **Motion made (Joe Probst), seconded (Judy Hohman), and unanimously approved to accept the draft minutes as amended to be final.**

D. Review of Board Actions since Last Board Meeting:

1. Financial Support for Michael Tuma to attend Commission Meeting: **On 4/10/2024, Mary Lane Poe made the motion, seconded by Judy Hohman, to pay up to \$1,000 for Michael Tuma to travel to San Jose on 4/17/2024 to be part of the presentation team to the California Fish and Game Commission on the petition to State-list the Mojave desert tortoise as Endangered, which was unanimously approved by 11 Board members** (Note: Several days before the event, Dr. Tuma caught Covid and did not attend, so these funds were not expended).

2. Desert Tortoise Uplisted from California Threatened to Endangered: Having joined the Defenders of Wildlife and Desert Tortoise Preserve Committee (DTPC) in the March 2020 petition to uplist the desert tortoise in California, the California Fish and Game Commission agreed that *Gopherus agassizii* should be listed as a State Endangered species rather than Threatened during their hearing on 4/17-18/2024.

3. Council as Beneficiary: On 4/23/2024, David Hedrick informs the Board that John Konecny named the Desert Tortoise Council as a beneficiary in the form of IRAs with a total value of \$193,526.36 (Traditional IRA- \$72,371.52, Roth IRA- \$121,154.84).

E. Special Discussion Items: None identified.

F. Next Meeting Date: The next virtual meeting of the Board of Directors will be on Zoom, beginning at 10:00 a.m. (PDT), on 7/20/2024.

OFFICER/COMMITTEE REPORTS

G. Treasurer's Report: In an electronic version of the Treasurer's Report¹, Joe Probst shared total income for 2024 as of 5/16/2024 is \$143,436.63, total expenses are \$160,983.69, with total assets of \$318,321.79. In 2024, budgeted expenses were \$289,360.28 compared to actual expenses of \$129,653.32, and budgeted income was \$222,850.00 compared to actual income of \$175,552.76. For the 2024 Symposium, expenses were \$105,660.98 compared to income of \$130,497.33, for a net profit of \$24,836.35, largely due to Mari Quillman's solicitation of sponsors. The impending donation (see item D.3, above) has not yet been received and is therefore not in the report. **Motion made (Becky Jones), seconded (Kristin Berry), and unanimously approved to accept the Treasurer's Report as final.**

Joe met with the Finance Committee which decided that profit and loss information will be provided bimonthly along with information to Ray Butler for the audit. **Joe Probst will research California's requirements for nonprofits, so the Finance Committee can decide if we need to hire a certified public accountant.** Kristin Berry shared that it costs about \$24,000/year for the DTPC's certified accountant, but that is based on their substantial lands holdings in excess of 20 million dollars. **Kristin Berry will provide Jun Lee's email address to Joe Probst so he can discuss accountant requirements.** Today, Judy Hohman joined Joe Probst, Ken MacDonald, and Rick Applegate on the Finance Committee. The committee considered ways to receive and invest the money provided by John Konecny. They recommend that \$30,000 of the money be placed into a money market account and the remaining +/- \$163,000 be placed into four, three-month certificates of deposit for the balance (see "Example 4" in Joe's spread sheet detailing five alternatives). **Motion made (Michael Tuma), seconded (Kristin Berry), and approved to allocate the initial legacy donation of \$193,526.36 as follows: \$30,000 in Money Markets and bulk in 90 day Certificates of Deposit (CDs).** The Finance Committee will reevaluate this strategy prior to the CD maturity dates and recommend new strategies, if any, to the Board regarding reinvestment, reallocation, and grant funding. **Dave Hedrick will share with the Board how best to publicly acknowledge this donation.**

H. Corresponding Secretary's Report: In an electronic version of her report, Becky Jones shared that there was a question about rehoming tortoises, which she referred to the California Turtle and Tortoise Club (CTTC); several questions about the Introductory Course, which were referred to Maggie Fusari; questions about tortoise photos, which were referred to David Hedrick; guidance on how to move tortoises out of harm's way off roads; several requests to post job announcements, which were directed to David Hedrick; a question about handling guidelines for Sonoran desert tortoises, which was directed to Judy Hohman; and an email about a tortoise in the Coachella Animal Shelter about to be euthanized, which was directed to California Department of Fish and Wildlife (CDFW). There was only one hard copy letter, which regarded the proposed Jove Solar Project, which was forwarded to the EAC. Becky and David Hedrick carbon copy each other on responses to avoid redundancy.

¹ <https://www.dropbox.com/scl/fi/n9f5za3n6bygb4inq67yf/2024-Budget-Actual-and-Treasurer-Report.xlsx?rlkey=kieixh6xrcvfs4qv7yearih9i&dl=0>

I. Membership Committee's Report: In the absence of Halle Kohn-Levine, no report was submitted.

J. Nominating Committee's Report: Ken MacDonald had nothing new to report.

K. Ecosystems Advisory Committee's (EAC) Report: In an electronic version of his report (see attachment), Ed LaRue reported that there were 11 projects identified and five reviewed by the Board in the reporting period between 3/30/2024 and 5/18/2024. One deadline was missed due to Ed writing down the wrong comment due date and the other five letters are still outstanding with future due dates. During the reporting period, Ed provided feedback on the phone to two California residents who had questions concerning EAC letters. Similarly, Ed and Judy Hohman helped someone with a data request in Nevada. Both Ed and Judy have been regularly attending virtual Zoom meetings to better understand proposed projects and ask questions.

Roger Dale of the DTPC recently asked Ed if they could begin cosigning letters with the Council. Ed responded that there would likely be some logistic issues like quick turnarounds and that he would introduce the idea to the Board, which was discussed. It may be best to have DTPC involved in specific, case-by-case comment letters. Kristin Berry, who is on the DTPC Board, said they would likely want to stay with projects in California. Mary Lane Poe felt it would strengthen our relationship and could result in providing meaningful input into our letters. It is not clear if we assume co-authorship and include DTPC's logos on our letters. Their input would be important concerning land management issues. Kristin Berry felt that DTPC wants to have a higher profile in writing letters. DTPC may also consider writing their own letters and incorporate our letters by reference, which would give them standing if they want to protest a decision, for example, or pursue legal actions. [Ed LaRue will contact Roger Dale to discuss how cosigning EAC letters may proceed.](#)

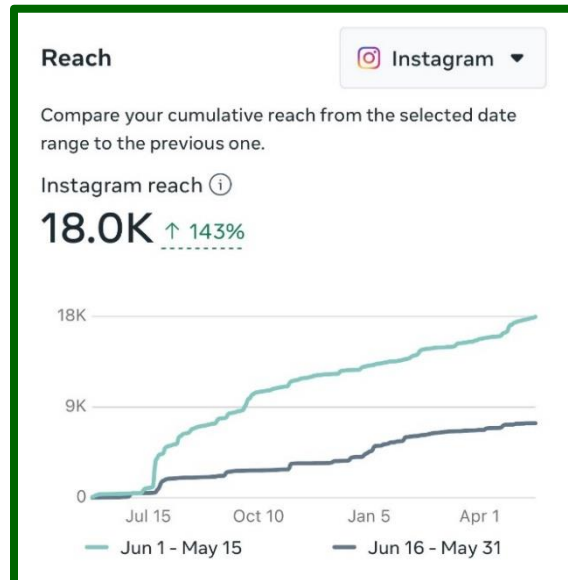
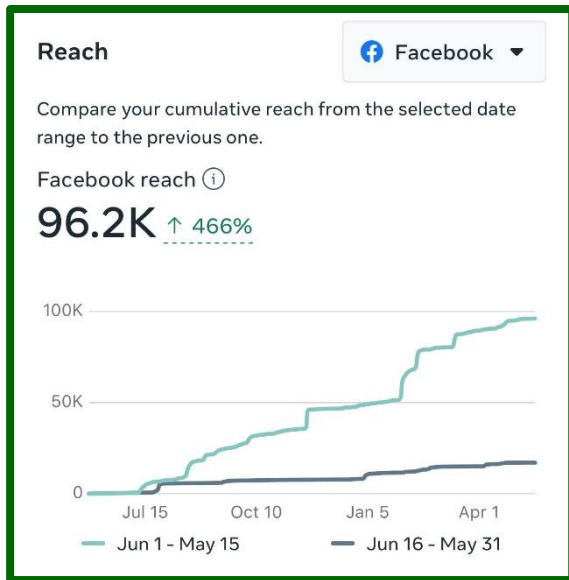
Maggie Fusari has taken the lead on representing the Council in a new petition by Western Watersheds to federally list the Sonoran desert tortoise as endangered. [Maggie Fusari will let Cyndi Tuell of Western Watersheds know that the Board approves announcing in their press release that the Council cosigned the petition to federally list the Sonoran desert tortoise as Endangered.](#)

L. Media Committee's Report: Halle Kohn-Levine was not present for a report, nor was an electronic version provided. In his Operations Manager report, David Hedrick provided the two comparison graphs, for Facebook and Instagram, respectively on the next page.

M. Strategic Planning Committee Report: There was nothing to report in Bruce Palmer's absence.

N. Grants Committee's Report: In an electronic version of his report, Michael Tuma reported we received two proposals for funding for our Innovations for Conservation of Desert Tortoise Populations or Habitat program funded by Edison International, which were reviewed by Michael, Maggie Fusari, and Alice Karl:

- The Time to Talk Trash program by The Living Desert Zoo & Gardens that aims to reduce human-provided subsidies for raven populations.
- The Limelight Laser Development and Testing project by Hardshell Labs that seeks to develop an effective nest dissuasion device to preclude raven nest site use.



The Grants & Academic Review Committee selected the Time to Talk Trash program by The Living Desert as the winner of the funding, which was for \$9,000. The proposals were submitted on February 29, 2024 and the applicants were notified of the committee’s decision on May 16, 2024. Michael suggested that we ask Hard Shell Labs to apply for a general grant. It was suggested that styrotorts could be fitted with a noise maker that is activated when the animal is inappropriately handled for future training on handling tortoises.

O. Agency Coordinating Committee’s Report: There is nothing to report for this committee.

P. Mexican Tortoise Conservation Committee (MTCC): There was nothing to report in Luke Basulto’s absence.

Q. Training Program Committee Report:

1. Introductory Training Course Committee’s Report: Maggie Fusari reported that we are almost ready to proceed with the 2024 Introductory Course. Lectures will be Friday & Saturday October 26-26. A field day will be either Friday, November 1 or Saturday, November 2. The fees are the same as they were in 2023: \$300 (\$200 for students) for early registration, \$400 (\$250 for students) for late registration, and Audit only option for the lectures for \$25. Auditors are welcome to attend the lectures without certificates and a caveat that if they want to attend a full course in future years, they will need to retake the lectures. Students complete the lectures online, take a brief and simple online quiz, and then travel to Ridgecrest for the field exercises (or “workshop” if you prefer that term for the field training). Lectures are via Zoom (managed by David Hedrick) on a Friday afternoon and Saturday morning. The field days in Ridgecrest are given twice to accommodate up to 100 people each day (managed by Pete Woodman). Please refer all questions about the course to: intro-course@deserttortoise.org.

Regarding **Organization members** our website currently says: “Discounted rate for two staff members for the Introductory Course.” Maggie suggested we adopt the student rate for Organizational members, which the Board approved. We currently have 22 Organization members but 8 of those are lapsed, leaving 14 eligible for discounts. [Maggie Fusari with work with Sky Esser to update the website as it pertains to the Introductory Course](#). Currently, 654 of 973 members are lapsed, with 309 active members. Many of the lapsed names were given a membership with a previous course and never renewed it, which is not done anymore. We need to make sure everyone given a membership privilege is an active member. Registration will be open at the end of June or early July.

2. Advanced Training Courses Committee’s Report: Mary Lane Poe chairs this committee. Christina Jones recently contacted the Council indicating that the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service will soon be releasing revised tortoise handling guidelines and that Arizona Game and Fish Department (AZGFD) has 50 captive tortoises that they can make available for a handling workshop. [Mari Quillman sent an email to Mary Lane, which she will forward to Maggie Fusari, regarding logistics for the next advanced training course, which could occur in spring of 2025](#). A preliminary tortoise handling course would be appropriate before an advanced course would be offered to those participants and more experienced, prospective participants.

R. Education and Outreach Committee’s Report: In her electronic report, Maggie Fusari indicated this committee needs to (1) Clarify the committee membership. (2) Document all outreach events done in the past year by our Board members and others. Also note if they were done as Council Board members or as private or agency events. (3) Develop a list of current and future event activities and opportunities. And, (4) Develop a plan to enhance our website regarding available events, sources of information, etc. [Maggie Fusari plans to hold a Zoom meeting of the committee, including David Hedrick, to work on these items](#). Joe Probst, Michael Tuma, and Ed LaRue attended the 60th Anniversary “Shellabration” of the CTTC in Norwalk in April, where Joe sold about \$530 in merchandise and Ed shared a modified version of Mari Quillman’s Chairperson report for 2023 activities. Maggie suggests we approach the California Science Teachers meeting, where we have presented before so we may reach teachers, and through them, their students. We can promote the audit option for our Introductory Course. It is almost impossible to reach teachers through the schools.

S. Annual Symposium Program Committee’s Report: [David Hedrick will begin to strategize ways of promoting the 50th anniversary.](#) • [Michael Tuma will modify the Council’s logo to celebrate our 50th anniversary](#). Some potential panels and sessions may include history of the Council; [Judy Hohman will help assemble Morafka Award winners](#); other topics identified for the Symposium included spotlight outstanding women and minority tortoise biologists; invite upper level government agency personnel and someone from the International Union for Conservation of Nature (IUCN); recent temperature increases and climate change; historical desert tortoise research; poetry reading/reptile art/photography; toxicants; panel on major conservation successes; tortoise longevity. [Ed LaRue offered to contact as many past Board members as possible to have a special ask-it-basket panel, Q&A session to share their historical perspectives during their terms of service](#).

T. Fundraising Committee Report: See discussion under item G, Treasurer’s Report.

U. Awards Committee’s Reports: Kristin Berry had nothing new to report for this committee.

V. Operations Manager Report: In an electronic report, David Hedrick shared that he plans on purchasing external camera, laptop, wireless headphones, and miscellaneous cables for approximately \$1,500.00. He and Joe worked together to reduce audio-visual expenses by \$5,000 for the 2025 Symposium contract, which has now been signed with Palace Station in Las Vegas for 24 (field trip) through 28 February 2025, which allows 3.5 days for presentations. **David Hedrick, Joe Probst, and Mari Quillman will plan to visit Palace Station in June 2024.** Between June and January, David plans to solicit support from new Symposium sponsors and former sponsors that did not contribute to the last Symposium, then reach out to the year's previous sponsors beginning in June of every year. **Judy Hohman will send a list of potential sponsors, including consulting firms, to David Hedrick.** Becky Jones regularly sends out thank you letters to sponsors. David plans to solicit auction items for Symposia and online auctions. He would like to identify grant concepts to solicit donations and sponsorships. This may include identifying price points for yearly grant funding at \$500, \$1,000, \$1,500, \$2,000. Potential projects may include research, specific projects like fencing virtual resource production, and/or travel grants for underserved biologists and students. Mari Quillman suggested that we can revise the existing sponsorship application for this purpose. David plans to conduct a small fundraising campaign for Word Turtle Day (May 23) consisting of several social media posts and two eblasts. Michael Tuma suggested contacting various entities, like consultants, to solicit sponsorships, which could be acknowledged by reduced attendance fees for Symposia and Introductory Course, for example.

David would like to pursue cooperative agreements and make strategic contacts with tribal groups, wildlife management departments, students, etc. Please think about who we may contact. Some ideas include: (1) Ken MacDonald has contacts with the Moapa River Indian Reservation, which may be a good group to contact given their proximity to Las Vegas and the local tortoise population. (2) Facilitate access to Symposia and Introductory Course recordings for students, colleges, wildlife management, etc. (3) Provide free virtual access to Symposia and Introductory Courses. (4) Possible free access to entire Introductory Course. (5) Provide travel grants (full ride) for Symposia pursuant to sponsorships. (6) Travel grants (full ride) for Introductory Course pursuant to sponsorships. (7) Increased consultation for tortoise management, etc.

With regards to breweries, David has identified several interested breweries and is still working to build up a volunteer base. He has mostly been in contact with CTTC chapters but is about to send out a request for volunteers to members and contacts. He has chapters ready to volunteer in the Victorville area, Redlands, Lancaster (**Judy Hohman suggested involving Edwards AFB and will provide a point of contact to David Hedrick**), and Ridgecrest, and needs to identify partner venues in those locations. If we can enlist Escape Brewing again, the event may coincide with or just prior to Desert Tortoise Week. Volunteer organization is going a bit slower than he would like but is coming along. He's hoping to be able to have events by late summer or early fall.

David requested that the Board fund his attendance at the 7/25-28/2024 Turtle Survival Alliance symposium in Tucson, AZ. Expenses include vendor cost of \$1,000, which includes symposium registrations for two participants with vendor table; six nights in a hotel at approximately \$139/night plus tax/fees (rounded up to \$150/night); car rental of \$443; and flight costs of \$600, which is approximately \$3,000 (\$2,943). In addition to networking at the meeting and helping Joe Probst sell merchandise, he would like to meet with AZGFD biologists to talk about organized promotion of tortoise educational messaging and their adoption program, and to meet with breweries in Phoenix and Tucson. While there, **David Hedrick and Joe Probst will also look at potential venues in Tucson for the 2026 Symposium.** • **Motion made (Ed LaRue), seconded (Joe Probst), and unanimously approved to provide up to \$3,000 for David Hedrick to attend the 2024 Turtle Survival Alliance Symposium as a representative of the Council.**

Finally, David built an online store in Square, which is the current platform we use for in-person sales. He created products and populated our Square store with the fulfilment service, Printful. The link to the store is at <https://desert-tortoise-council-inc.square.site/>. The store is live and we are receiving and filling orders. Customers pay us through Square, and Printful charges us for their portion from our checking account. The difference is our profit. It's not a large profit, but it allows Council merchandise to be purchased abroad and not just at in-person events. We benefit by not having to produce, store, and ship merchandise and by having visible products more widely out in the public sphere. There have been 8-10 orders and a profit of about \$100, which is great because there are few expenses and the platform allows us to promote the Council. Michael Tuma and David have been working on an embroidered patch of our logo. Judy Hohman shared that we should begin promoting the virtual store in October, in time for buying Christmas presents.

W. Master Calendar: Judy Hohman reported that we are essentially meeting the action item dates published in the calendar. Joe Probst shared that all tax forms have been filed and approved, which was due in May.

NEW BUSINESS

X. Manuals: DTPC is working on updating its employee manual. **Kristin Berry will talk to Jun Lee about providing this manual to Judy Hohman.**

Adjourn: The meeting was adjourned by Chairperson, Mari Quillman, at 13:07 (PDT).

Draft minutes were recorded and respectfully submitted for approval to all Board members on 18 May 2024 by Ed LaRue, Recording Secretary and approved as final on 20 July 2024.



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

Ecosystems Advisory Committee Report DTC Board Meeting of 18 May 2024

Note: The table attached to this report on the last page follows the **bold red** numbered outline given below.

1. Rough Hat Clark Solar Project Draft EIS and RMP Amendment (Clark Co, NV)

On **1/11/2024**, the BLM provided a link to this project, which has a due date of **4/11/2024**. The draft letter is circulated on **4/10/2024** and submitted to the BLM on **4/10/2024** with five endorsements and one recusal.

2. 2023/2024 Solar Programmatic EIS (revises 2012 Solar PEIS) (CA, AZ, UT, NV)

On **1/19/2024**, a third party provides us with a link to this project. No due date is given but the Federal Register says there's a 90-day comment period at **4/18/2023**. The project was featured at the MOG on **4/4/2024**, which Ed LaRue attended. The draft letter is circulated on **4/13/2024** and submitted to the BLM on **4/17/2024** with seven endorsements and one recusal.

3. ADOT's Tentative Five-Year Construction Program (Arizona)

On **3/2/2024**, we receive a notice directly from ADOT for this project, which is due on **5/24/2024**.

4. Public Land Withdrawal in Vicinity of Highway 95 and Yuma Proving Ground (Arizona)

On **3/1/2024**, we received a link from a third party for this project, with a due date of **4/15/2024**. Unfortunately, these tables said the due date was **4/27/2024**, so the deadline was missed. Since this is a Legislative Environmental Impact Statement, for public information only, it has been my experience that there is limited usefulness in making a difference to these Congressionally-approved actions.

5. La Madre Recreation Area Management Plan (BLM NV)

On **3/22/2024**, we received a link from the BLM for this project in Red Rock Canyon National Conservation Area, with a due date of **4/22/2024**. The draft letter was distributed on **4/21/2024** and submitted to the BLM on **4/22/2024** with 11 endorsements.

6. Thistle Solar, TAP Solar, and Yellow Cups Solar (Arizona)

On **4/14/2024**, BLM sends a link announcing a webinar that Ed LaRue and Judy Hohman attend. Comments are due on **5/17/2024**. The draft letter was first provided to Judy Hohman on **5/5/2024**, and circulated to the Board for approval on **5/8/2024** after her review and input. The letter is submitted to the BLM on **5/13/2024** with 10 endorsements.

7. Rigo Favela Road Right of Way (San Bernardino Co, CA)

On **4/28/2024**, the unsolicited draft letter is distributed to the Board and submitted to the BLM on **4/30/2024** with 12 endorsements.

8. GridLiance: Draft EIS and RMPA (Nye, Clark Cos, NV)

On **4/18/2024**, we received an email from BLM announcing the GridLiance: Draft Environmental Impact Statement and Resource Management Plan Amendment with and due date of **7/18/2024**. Judy Hohman attended a virtual meeting on **5/7/2024**.

9. Jove Solar Project Draft EIS (La Paz, AZ)

On **4/23/2024**, we received a hard copy notice from the BLM on this date for the Jove Solar Project Draft Environmental Impact Statement with a due date of **6/3/2024**. Ed LaRue attends the virtual public meeting on **5/14/2024**.

10. Northern Corridor (UT)

On **5/9/2024**, the BLM sends the Council a notice and link to the draft supplemental environmental impact statement (DEIS), with a deadline for comments on **6/24/2024**.

11. Sonoran Desert National Monument Grazing Amendment (Arizona)

On **5/10/2024**, we receive a notice from the BLM that the comment period is open and will close on **6/10/2024**.

**Ecosystems Advisory Committee
Summary Table from 3/30/2024 to 5/18/2024**

Current date for this latest table revision is: 5/14/2024

Dates are for 2023 or 2024						Board Member Responses															
						Codes: Y = Vote of Yes; N = Vote of No; PI = Provided input; Blank = No Response; R = Recused; A = Authors/Lead Board member; NA – Replied they were not able to respond by indicated date															
#	Title	Rec'd	Dist	Due	Sent	BJ	BP	EL	HK	JH	JP	LB	KB	KM	MF	MH	MP	MQ	MT	PW	RA
1	Rough Hat Clark Solar	1/11	4/10	4/11	4/10	Y 4/11		Y/PI 4/10		Y/PI 4/10	Y 4/10			R 4/10	Y 4/10		Y/PI 4/10		Y 4/10		
2	2023/2024 Solar PEIS	1/19	4/13	4/18	4/18	Y 4/16		Y/A 4/13		Y/PI 4/14	Y 4/15			R 4/17	Y 4/19	Y 4/18	Y 4/17	Y 4/17	Y 4/17	Y 4/18	Y 4/17
3	ADOT 5-year plan	3/1		5/24																	
4	Yuma Land Withdrawal	3/1	N/A	4/27	N/A	Ed wrote down wrong due date and missed the deadline															
5	Red Rock Canyon RAMP	3/25	4/21	4/22	4/22	Y 4/21		Y/PI 4/21		Y/PI 4/21	Y 4/21			Y 4/21	Y 4/21	Y 4/22	Y 4/22	Y 4/22	Y 4/21	Y 4/22	Y 4/22
6	3 Arizona solar projects	4/14	5/8	5/17	5/13	Y 5/10		Y/A 5/5		Y/PI 5/8	Y 5/8			Y 5/10	Y 5/9		Y 5/10	Y/PI 5/9	Y 5/10		Y 5/10
7	Rigo Favela Road ROW	4/28	4/28	N/A	4/30	Y 4/28		Y/PI 4/30		Y/PI 4/28	Y 4/29			Y/PI 4/28	Y 4/28	Y 4/28	Y 4/30	Y/PI 4/28	Y 4/28	Y 4/30	Y 4/29
8	Gridlance	4/18		7/18																	
9	Jove Solar Project	4/23		6/3																	
10	Northern Corridor	5/9		6/24																	
11	Sonoran Grazing	5/10		6/10																	

BJ = Becky Jones, **BP** = Bruce Palmer, **EL** = Ed LaRue, **HK** = Halle Kohn-Levine, **JH** = Judy Hohman, **JP** = Joe Probst, **KB** = Kristin Berry, **KM** = Ken MacDonald, **LB** = Luke Basulto, **MH** = Max Havelka, **MF** = Maggie Fusari, **MP** = Mary Lane Poe, **MQ** = Mari Quillman, **MT** = Michael Tuma, **PW** = Pete Woodman, **RA** = Rick Applegate