Final Final Final

Desert Tortoise Council Minutes of the Board of Directors Meeting

18 October 2019 Excalibur Hotel & Casino Las Vegas, Nevada

CALL TO ORDER

The meeting was called to order by Chair, Michael Tuma at 10:10 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, Greer Dolby, Peter Woodman, Judy Hohman, Ken MacDonald, Cristina Jones, Maggie Fusari, Bruce Palmer, Michael Tuma, Becky Jones, Joe Probst, Ed LaRue, Halle Kohn, Michael Vamstad. **Remote Attendance:** None. **Absent**: Mark Peaden, Larry LaPré, and Mari Quillman **Guests**: None.

- **A. Introductions**: None. Most of the Board members participated in a facilities walk-thru immediately following the Board meeting.
- **B. Review Agenda**: New issues were incorporated as needed.
- C. Meeting Minutes of 8 June 2019: Ed LaRue prepared draft minutes at the last Board meeting in Las Vegas, NV, which were distributed, reviewed, and approved today as final with no changes. Motion made (Joe Probst), seconded (Greer Dolby), and unanimously approved to accept the draft minutes as amended to be final.
- **D. Review of Board Actions since Last Board Meeting**: None.
- **E. Next Meeting Date**: The next meeting of the Board of Directors will be at Excalibur, between 10:00 a.m. and approximately 4:00 p.m., on 11 January 2020. Judy Hohman indicated U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service (USFWS) expressed an interest in meeting with us in the future in conjunction with a Management Oversite Group meeting, for example.

OFFICER/COMMITTEE REPORTS

F. Treasurer's Report: A shortened version of the Treasurer's Report was distributed by Joe Probst, which shows expenses to date for 2019 of \$136,188.78 and Total Assets of \$192,951.93 (excludes expenses of recent The Wildlife Society meeting in Reno, NV and the costs of this Board meeting). Kristin Berry asked that Joe Probst provide an accounting/summary for our visits and representation at various society meetings, most of which are on the East Coast next year. **Motion made (Judy Hohman), seconded (Becky Jones), and unanimously approved to accept the Treasurer's Report as final.**

- **G.** Corresponding Secretary's Report: Becky Jones reported Workshop-related materials have been forwarded to respective members. There have also been a few requests for additional training, which Maggie Fusari also sees in Introductory Course evaluations. We also received an acknowledgement from the BLM on our recent Protest on the West Mojave Route Network EIS. Ed LaRue will scan the Protest letter and provide it to Board members and Sky Esser to be posted on the website.
- H. Grants Committee's Report: Michael Tuma reported on the following two issues.
- **a. Southern California Edison (SCE)**: Ken MacDonald worked with SCE to obtain a \$10,000 grant to create a "tortoise garden" of native plants within their jurisdiction. The \$10,000 would be for one year, with a chance of amending it into several years, be at one site, and possibly with multiple units. The **Grants Committee** needs to submit a request for proposal (RFP) notice for 30 days for this project, which would solicit applications, and later be considered under the guidelines of our committee. **Greer Dolby** will write the RFP for this project using SCE's terms and conditions and provide it to the Grants Committee (chaired by Michael Tuma, who will bring in other Board members). In the future, it would be best to solicit grants that are not so restrictive.
- b. Glenn Stewart Travel Fund, Morafka Award, and Diversity Grant announcements: The availability of these grants was recently posted by Michael Tuma on our website. We may want to use social media to reach out to universities, for example, to solicit applications. Responses to applications are due by early December 2019. Halle Kohn and Michael Tuma will develop a list of universities and other organizations we can target to publish the availability of our various grants. Michael Tuma will work with Mari Quillman to contact our membership and others in the data base to publish grants availability. Lockheed-Martin has already provided \$2,000 for the Diversity Grant in 2020, which we have been matching with \$1,000. Motion made (Ed LaRue), seconded (Bruce Palmer), and unanimously approved to provide matching funds so the grant total is \$2,500 for the Lockheed-Martin Grant and \$2,500 for the Morafka Award, for a total of \$5,000 for these two grants.
- I. Membership Committee's Report: A Gift Membership is already on the printed application but not on the website. Judy Hohman will work with Sky Esser to add a Gift Membership link to the website and to resolve several other issues. In a report provided only to the Membership Committee, Mari Quillman indicated that as of October 15, 2019, there were 278 active members, renewal dates are now on the website, the issues with lapsed and overdue memberships have been resolved, the printable membership form has been completed, acknowledging contributors and benefits of organizational membership has been added, etc. Mari indicated that she wants an updated merchandise inventory with photos that can be used to sell items over the website. Michael Tuma volunteered to contact someone who may be willing to take these merchandise photos for free. Judy Hohman and Joe Probst volunteered to photograph merchandise. Mari Quillman will then work with Sky Esser to post these photos and organize the online store.
- **a. Draft Committee Policy**: Mari Quillman recently distributed the draft policy to Membership Committee members, which Judy Hohman reviewed closely. Judy had a few small grammatical changes that she suggested be changed, which was provided to the committee but not the entire Board. Given this progress, the committee will continue to look at details, including several unresolved issues, and provide results to the entire Board once complete.

J. Ecosystems Advisory Committee's (EAC) Report: Ed LaRue reported that there were 12 projects identified and 12 reviewed and commented on by the Board in the reporting period between 6/9/2019 and 10/18/2019. Kristin Berry would like us to develop a standard weed management paragraph that can be inserted into comment letters. Ed responded that there has not been any feedback on standardized paragraphs, which would encompass this issue. Ed LaRue will contact Jeff Aardahl about the status of the Defenders petition for State-listing as Endangered. Ed expressed his concern and disappointment that recent programmatic plans, such as Desert Renewable Energy Conservation Plan and West Mojave Route Designation, have seemingly become recreation-centric, providing more opportunities for recreational vehicle use in Critical Habitat and Tortoise Conservation Areas. Ed LaRue will contact Jeff Aardahl about the next steps on the West Mojave Route Designation following our formal Protest (receipt acknowledged on 10/3/2019) and consider a formal appeal to the Interior Board of Land Appeals (IBLA).

K. Media Committee's Report:

- **a. Social Media/Newsletter updates**: Halle Kohn reported there are 541 Instagram followers, 1,661 Facebook likes, 1,731 Facebook followers, and 239 Twitter followers, with significant increases since June. The Newsletter will likely go out next month, including a blurb on EAC function, republished materials from a Utah paper, land purchase in thornscrub habitat using Council funds, and spotlight on Council Board members, Kristin Berry and Judy Hohman.
- **b.** Website additions/Updates: Judy Hohman and others have been working on a standardized response to the public when they ask about issues with captive tortoises, which will eventually be added to the website. Michael Tuma recently updated the availability of various grants. The Media Committee needs to work with Sky Esser on the donations page that still references Green Earth Planet, which is an artifact that needs to be removed. Also, need to develop a dedicated donations acceptance page. Michael Tuma asked that all members requesting anything of Sky Esser carbon copy him on those requests.
- L. Agency Coordinating Committee's Report: Cristina Jones, Ken MacDonald, Bruce Palmer, Michael Tuma, and Judy Hohman and Ed LaRue (by phone) met with Jeff Aardahl (Defenders of Wildlife, also by phone) in Las Vegas with USFWS Desert Tortoise Recovery Office (DTRO) biologists Glen Knowles and Roy-Averill Murray on 20 June 2019. She, Ken MacDonald, Judy Hohman, Bruce Palmer, and Ed LaRue held a follow-up meeting with USFWS Palm Springs biologists and DTRO biologists in Palm Springs, CA on 10 October 2019. The October minutes were recorded and distributed yesterday to USFWS biologists in attendance. There was substantial discussion about identifying large Focus Areas in the West Mojave, developed by Linda Allison, where intensive recovery actions could be implemented, perhaps with funds from the Recovery and Sustainability Priorities Initiative (RSPI), which is an initiative being planned between USFWS and Department of Defense. In 2014, Kristin Berry provided maps showing head-start release areas on Edwards Air Force Base and at Desert Tortoise Research Natural Area where, among other things, agencies should strive for a raven no-fly zone. There was a commitment expressed by the Council to have a similar coordination meeting with California Department of Fish and Wildlife biologists. Becky Jones will provide feedback to clarify statements on CDFW permitting and authorities in the October coordination meeting. • Cristina Jones and Scott Hoffman will meet in December to work on the USFWS Field Manual and plan additional workshops.

- **M.** Introductory Training Course Committee's Report: Maggie Fusari reported the Introductory Training Course is scheduled for November 2-3, 2019 in Ridgecrest, CA, with 100 students signed-up and a waiting list of 17 prospective students. This is our second year at Kerr-McGee center in Ridgecrest.
- **a. Audio-visual logistics**: David Carr will be there with the transmitter and two different types of microphones, both a clip-on and headset.
- **b.** Course review: Cristina Jones, Ken MacDonald, and Bruce Palmer as Board members and Kerry Holcomb (USFWS, Palm Springs) and Eric Procter (Arizona Game and Fish) as independent observers will attend to review the course.
- **c. Last-minute items**: Maggie Fusari will provide Ed LaRue and Pete Woodman with the list of attendees so Ed can calligraphy certificates and so Pete can produce wall sheets, and to provide a copy of the agenda to all Board members. Joe Probst will bring the Ask-It-Basket to Ridgecrest. Since Becky Jones recently retired, Ashley Rosales, a new CDFW biologist, will be there to help with the transition, so Ashley can be the CDGW representative next year. Pete Woodman said he is prepared for all of the field work logistics.

N. Advanced Training Courses Committee's Report:

- **a. Planning for Health Assessment Training**: Cristina Jones will be meeting with USFWS biologists in February at the Symposium to plan for this and other training courses. Most people who are requesting the Authorized Biologist training do not have enough handling experience, so we likely need to develop a Tortoise Handling course to begin training biologists who could later participate in the Authorized Biologist course.
- O. Education and Outreach Committee's Report: Council members are asked to let Joe Probst know about upcoming conferences so we can budget for their involvement. The Association of Fish and Wildlife Agencies will be September 13 15, 2020 in Sacramento, CA. The Western Section of The Wildlife Society will be in Redding, CA in early February 2020, so will not conflict with our Symposium. Both the brochure and membership forms should be taken to all future events. Maggie Fusari will produce a form, so each person attending an event on behalf of the Council can provide her with feedback on their observations. Maggie Fusari will work with Michael Tuma to discuss and develop website components for educators, captive tortoise owners, etc. as links to other resources.
- **a. Review of The Wildlife Society meeting in Reno, NV**: Joe Probst indicated there were more than 4,000 attendees, and that the Council was the main source of merchandise for sale. Bruce Palmer noted that there was a steady stream of visitors to the Council's table at this event, where we sold about \$1,200 in merchandise, and it cost about \$3,000 to attend. Joe Probst recently rented a cargo van to transport merchandise, which is less expensive than shipping or even reimbursing Council members for mileage on their personal vehicles.
- **b. STEM Summit in Santa Clarita, CA**: A STEM (= Science, Technology, Engineering, Math) event will be in Santa Clarita on November 16, 2019. Joe Probst, Becky Jones, Michael Tuma, and Halle Kohn all plan to attend this event to interface with students about Council function and will prepare a summary of the event.

P. Mexico Coordination Committee. Michael Vamstad reported he has been working on the mission and vision statement for this committee. He will use recent input from Michael Tuma to incorporate and use for the committee policy, which he is developing. The Council provided \$20,000 to purchase a ranch with Bolson tortoise, there was another \$20,000 grant to support another reserve, about ten years ago we supported the Mexican Tortoise Project, we also funded translating David Lamfrom's "Tortoise Through the Lens" book into Spanish, and several years ago we provided a travel grant to a young Mexican biologist. The recent letter of introduction Michael Vamstad circulated about a cooperative agreement with Mexican government officials will soon be translated by Miriam Lara-Vamstad. He plans to visit Mexico in April 2020 and hopefully make a few connections.

Q. Annual Symposium Program Committee's Report:

a. Planning 2020 Symposium: The 45th Annual Symposium is planned here at Excalibur, February 20-23, 2020. The call for papers was put on the website in late August, which is earlier than usual. There are invited speakers about impacts of railroads; raven egg-oiling; translocation/augmentation/head-starting; Asian turtle trade; full session on impacts of roads and other linear projects, and effectiveness of culverts to minimize habitat fragmentation; invite federal and state law enforcement; and Cristina Jones has contacts who are willing to present a paper and conduct a workshop for a minimum of 20 students on creating lightweight GIS data loggers (may be a good Thursday workshop). Becky Jones and Michael Vamstad are assisting Kristin Berry on the government session (policy/accomplishments, not research); at the coordination meeting last week, USFWS was invited to present on the progress of the RSPI, which may best fit in the government agency session.

Mari Quillman will likely still help find donors and other sponsors, and always needs help from other Board members. Ed LaRue will pursue potential donations with ERTEC (fencing contractor) and Patagonia. Maggie Fusari is overseeing vendors and will have vendors commit no later than early January 2020. She is about to send out the vendor invitation, which clarifies registration status and asks that they provide items to be raffled or auctioned. Currently there are for-profits who are selling, nonprofits who are not selling, and nonprofits who are selling. Motion made, seconded, and approved that each vendor be registered and a donated raffle item of a minimum \$50 value be provided. Additional people associated with the vendor must also be registered. Ed LaRue will provide Kristin Berry with a write-up for a brief presentation on the Zulu Nyala trip to be in the program to stimulate interest in the raffle for this event. Tim Shields indicated that he may be able to have a drone manufacturer there with their products. Pete Woodman indicated that Sloan Canyon is a great petroglyph site that is just under a four-mile round trip, which he will visit on Monday to see if it is appropriate.

Several years ago, Ken MacDonald found that compared to other groups our registration fee is very small. Current registration is \$270 for members. Motion made, seconded, and approved to adopt the following registration fees for 2020: \$300 early member, \$360 late member; \$360 early non-member, \$420 late non-member; \$185 early student, \$235 late student; \$200 early spouse/partner, \$250 late spouse/sponsor; and \$185 early retiree, \$235 late retiree.

- **b. 2021 Venue in St. George, Utah**: This facility is brand new but we are not sure if it will accommodate us. Tracy Bailey has visited the site but was not sure how large the screen was, for example. Kristin Berry will contact Tracy Bailey to see if this venue is appropriate for us so that we can vote to use the site, or not, within the next week.
- **R. Nominations Committee's Reports**: Current Board members whose terms expire in 2020 include Mari Quillman, Ken MacDonald, Cristina Jones, Larry LaPré, Judy Hohman, and Greer Dolby. Officer positions up for 2020 include Corresponding Secretary (Becky Jones) and Treasurer (Joe Probst). Members' continuing interest in serving will be discussed at the January Board meeting. Michael Tuma will contact Mark Peaden to confirm that he is no longer available to serve.

NEW BUSINESS

S. Strategic Plan update: The retreat will occur over the next two days, until about 17:00 on Saturday and finish up at about 13:00 on Sunday.

Adjourn: The meeting was adjourned by Chairperson, Michael Tuma, at approximately 16:30 hours.

These final minutes were recorded, circulated to the Board for input, revised as needed, and respectfully submitted by Ed LaRue, Recording Secretary.

Edward L. LaRue, Jr.

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Desert Tortoise Council, Recording Secretary

Ecosystems Advisory Committee Report DTC Board Meeting of 18 October 2019

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

1. Fundamental reforms to the Export-Import Bank (Ex-Im Bank) (National)

6/7/2019 – Ed LaRue receives a link to this letter from Stephanie Kurose of Center for Biological Diversity on 6/7/2019 recommending that the House Committee on Financial Services make fundamental reforms to the Export-Import Bank (Ex-Im Bank) as it considers legislation to reauthorize this important institution. Wholly funded by the American people, the Ex-Im Bank should comply with all U.S. laws, but unfortunately, it ignores most environmental laws (including the Endangered Species Act). With one vote of no and six endorsements, I let Kurose know that the Council supports the letter on 6/14/2019.

2. Gemini Solar Project (Clark County, NV)

6/8/2019 – On 6/8/2019, Ed LaRue receives notice of this proposed 7,000-acre solar site to be located north of Las Vegas, NV, which he distributes to the Board on the same day. Ed is interviewed by Daniel Rothberg of a newspaper in the Las Vegas area on 7/19/2019. An anonymous Board member attends the public meeting on 7/23/2019. With seven endorsements and one recusal, the letter is submitted on 8/16/2019.

- 3. Interstate 11 Tier 1 Draft Environmental Impact Statement (DEIS) (Nogales to Wickenburg, AZ) 6/12/2019 Richard Spotts sends set of comments on this Arizona-based project on 6/12/2019, which Ed forwards to Maggie Fusari, Greer Dolby, Cristina Jones, and Bruce Palmer on 6/17/2019. Maggie Fusari's draft letter received by Ed on 7/1/2019 is immediately distributed, with a cited deadline of 7/6/2019. With five endorsements, the final letter is delivered electronically on 7/7/2019 and postal service on 7/8/2019.
- **4.** West-Wide Energy Corridor (California, Western Arizona, and Southern Nevada)
 6/20/2019 On 6/20/2019, Ed LaRue receives a link concerning the West Wide Energy Corridor, which Ed distributes to the Board on 6/25/2019 along with the October 2016 recommendation letter submitted to the federal agencies overseeing the project. Deadline for comments is 7/22/2019. No action on this, as our comments were already submitted and planners are not likely to listen now if they didn't then.

5. Petition to List Agassiz's Desert Tortoise as Endangered in California

6/25/2019 – On 6/25/2019, Ed LaRue (and Ron Berger with DTPC) receive a draft petition from Jeff Aardahl with Defenders of Wildlife to upgrade the California state listing of Agassiz's desert tortoise from Threatened to Endangered, which Ed immediately distributes to other Board members. With a record 13 endorsements, on 7/1/2019 Ed redistributes the latest version of the petition to Board members, ccing Jeff Aardahl to let him know he has full endorsement (with Cristina Jones and Becky Jones recusing themselves) sufficient to have the Council officially signed on.

6. Northern Corridor – Lee Bill Joint Statement (St. George, Utah)

6/27/2019 – Ed LaRue receives a request on 6/27/2019 from David Feinman of Conservation Lands Foundation to draft a paragraph that can be sent to Senator Lee in anticipation of his resubmission of a new bill to promote development of the Northern Corridor through Red Cliffs NCA. Ed distributes a two-paragraph response to the Board on 7/1/2019 for Board consideration and approval by no later than 7/6/2019. With the original letter and three endorsements, the statement was delivered on 7/6/2019.

7. 40-95 Communications Site (Northwest of Needles, California)

7/3/2019 – Ed LaRue receives a link for this communications site and access road on 7/3/2019, with comments due on 8/3/2019. Ed distributes the draft letter on 7/30/2019. With six endorsements, the letter is submitted to BLM on 8/2/2019.

- **8.** Rocky Mountain Power Powerline Upgrade Project and City of St. George Waterline Development Project Red Cliffs National Conservation Area (St. George, Utah)
- 7/29/2019 On this date, Ed LaRue receives a link for the proposed project, which has a due date 8/27/2019. The draft comment letter is distributed to Judy Hohman and Richard Spotts for their early review on 8/9/2019, with a due date for comments by 8/16/2019. The draft version was distributed to the Board on 8/11/2019. With five endorsements and two recusals, the letter is submitted on 8/16/2019
- 9. <u>BLM's Preliminary EA to issue leases for oil and gas in Lincoln and White Pine Counties Nevada</u> 8/25/2019 Ed LaRue distributes the link announcing the project on 8/15/2019. In Ed's absence, a draft letter is distributed to Board members on 8/25/2019. With eight endorsements, the final comment letter was submitted to the BLM on 8/29/2019.
- 10. <u>Chaparrals Dual Sport Event Recreation Permit Categorical Exclusion (Jawbone Canyon, CA)</u>
 9/26/2019 The link to this Categorical Exclusion running from Jawbone Canyon towards Lake Isabella was received on 9/26/2019 with comments due on 10/3/2019. Ed LaRue drafted and circulated the comment letter on 9/30/2019. With 11 endorsements, the final letter is sent out on 10/3/2019.
- 11. CBD letter supporting funding levels for endangered species conservation (National)
 10/7/2019 Ed LaRue receives a letter from Center for Biological Diversity asking us to co-sign a letter encouraging the Senate appropriators to adopt the House-passed funding levels for endangered species conservation. Ed forwards this request to the Board on 10/9/2019 asking for immediate response to meet 10/11/2019 deadline.
- 12. Cache Creek Pipeline (Kern County, California)

10/8/2019 - Ed LaRue receives a link for this project on 10/8/2019, which he forwards to the Board on 10/9/2019, with a due date of 10/22/2019. Unresolved at the time of the Board meeting on 10/18/2019.

Ecosystems Advisory Committee Summary Table from 6/9/2019 to 10/18/2019

Current date for this latest table revision is: 10/18/2019

		Dates (2019)				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 -															NA –	
N. TOTAL						Replied they were not able to respond by indicated date																
No.	Title	Rec'd	Dist	Due	Sent	BJ	BP	CJ	EL	GD	HK	JH	JP	KB	KM	LL	MF	MP	MQ	MT	MV	PW
1	Ex-Im Bank	6/7	6/7	6/14	6/14				Y 6/7		Y 6/13	Y/PI 6/8	Y 6/12	Y 6/12		N 6/11						Y 6/14
2	Gemini Solar	6/8	6/8	9/5	8/16				Y/A 8/12				Y 8/13	Y 8/13	R 8/16	Y/PI 8/12	Y 8/12				Y 8/15	Y/PI 8/12
3	I-11 Freeway DEIS	6/17	6/17 7/1	7/8	7/8	Y 7/8			Y/PI 7/1				Y 7/6	0/13	0/10	Y/PI 7/1	Y/A 7/1				Y 7/8	0/12
4	West-Wide Energy Corridor	6/20	6/25	7/22	N/A	No action taken or deemed necessary																
5	CA State Listing Petition	6/25	6/25	7/2	7/1	R 6/26	Y 6/26	R 6/27	Y/PI 6/28	Y 6/25	Y 6/25	Y 6/25	Y 6/26	Y 6/26	Y 6/25	Y 6/25	Y 6/25		Y 7/2	Y 6/26	Y 6/28	Y 6/26
6	Northern Corridor – Lee	6/27	7/1	7/6	7/6		R 7/2		Y/A 7/1			Y/PI 7/3	Y/PI 7/2			Y/PI 7/2						
7	40-95 Comm Site	7/3	7/30	8/2	8/2		Y 8/1		Y/A 7/30				Y 7/31			Y 8/1	Y 7/30				Y 8/1	
8	St. George Power & Water	7/29	8/11	8/16	8/16		R 8/12		Y/A 8/11				Y 8/12	Y 8/13	R 8/14	Y 8/16	Y 8/11					
9	Nevada Oil and Gas Leases	8/15	8/25	9/6	8/29	Y 8/26				Y 8/26	Y 8/31	Y/PI 8/25	Y 8/26		Y 8/26	Y/PI 8/26	Y 8/25		Y/PI 8/26	Y 9/9		
10	Chaparrals Dual Sport	9/26	9/30	10/3	10/3	Y/PI 9/30			Y/A 9/30			Y/PI 10/1	Y 10/1		Y/PI 10/1	Y/PI 9/30	Y 9/30		Y 10/2	Y 10/3	Y/PI 10/2	Y 10/3
11	CBD Letter	10/7	10/9	10/11	10/11	Y 10/10			Y 10/9	Y 10/11	Y 10/11		Y 10/10		Y 10/11	Y 10/9	Y 10/10			Y 10/9	R 10/9	Y 10/11
12	Cache Creek Pipeline	10/8	10/9	10/22																		
13																						
																					<u> </u>	

BJ = Becky Jones, **BP** = Bruce Palmer, **CJ** = Cristina Jones, **EL** = Ed LaRue, **GD** = Greer Dolby, **HK** = Halle Kohn, **JH** = Judy Hohman, **JP** = Joe Probst, **KB** = Kristin Berry, **KM** = Ken MacDonald, **LL** = Larry LaPré, **MF** = Maggie Fusari, **MP** = Mark Peaden, **MQ** = Mari Quillman, **MT** = Michael Tuma, **MV** = Michael Vamstad, **PW** = Pete Woodman