

Final Final Final

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

**23 October 2021
Zoom Online Meeting**

CALL TO ORDER

The meeting was called to order by Chairperson-elect, Mari Quillman 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: Kristin Berry, Greer Dolby, Peter Woodman, Judy Hohman, Cristina Jones, Maggie Fusari, Mari Quillman, Michael Tuma, Becky Jones, Joe Probst, Ed LaRue, Halle Kohn, and Michael Vamstad. **Absent:** Ken MacDonald and Bruce Palmer. **Guests:** None.

A. Welcome/Announcements/Introductions: None.

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

C. Approval of Meeting Minutes of 14 August 2021: 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 (Cristina Jones), and unanimously approved to accept the draft minutes as amended to be final.**

D. Review of Board Actions since Last Board Meeting:

a. Use of “Desert Apocalypse, Episode 1, Yellow Pine Solar” at 2022 Symposium: On 8/16/2021, Ken MacDonald posed the following question, “whether you think the Desert Tortoise Council should air portions of the Basin and Range Watch video at the next [2022] Symposium?” Use of this video was endorsed by seven members prior to today’s meeting, and by seven additional members during the Board meeting, so the issue passed with unanimous support of those voting on the issue.

b. Greer Dolby Resignation: Greer Dolby recently let the Board know that she will be resigning from the Board as of the 2022 Symposium. In 2019 she was promoted at Arizona State to Assistant Research Professor, which has a substantial workload and precludes her ability to continue as a Board member.

E. Next Meeting Date: The next virtual meeting of the Board of Directors will be on Zoom, beginning at 10:00 a.m. (PST), on 4 December 2021, pending input from Bruce Palmer (**Mari Quillman will contact Bruce about availability**).

OFFICER/COMMITTEE REPORTS

F. Treasurer's Report: An electronic version of the Treasurer's Report was distributed by Joe Probst in an email prior to the meeting. As per Joe's report, dated 10/21/2021, our total income as of 9/30/2021 is \$89,752.24, total expenses are \$56,949.68, and total assets are \$220,765.16. **Motion made (Ed LaRue), seconded (Cristina Jones), and unanimously approved to accept the Treasurer's Report as final.** Joe anticipates incomes of \$50,000 to \$60,000 in 2021 for the Introductory Course, Workshops and 2022 for the Symposium. Our main recent expenditures were a \$10,000 contribution to TSA and insurance policies. **Greer Dolby will work with Joe Probst on the Go Fund Me and Amazon Smile accounts so we may receive these monies, and Halle Kohn will forward an email to Joe Probst regarding Amazon Smile.**

G. Annual Symposium Program Committee's Report: Kristin Berry reported that she has a list of speakers, and has put out the calls for papers and abstracts, so that we have everything ready by mid-January. The dates for the virtual Symposium are February 15, 17, 18, 22, 24, and 25, 2022. She hopes to have more global representation at this Symposium. Kristin expects to have about a third of the abstracts by November 15, and will continue to solicit them. **Kristin Berry will provide additional notices to Mari Quillman who will eblast them periodically.** Mari reported there have been several meetings with the Symposium Subcommittee to discuss and plan for the event. Maggie Fusari is handling the vendors and nonprofits; Mari is working with sponsors (one already) and eblasting pertinent announcements; website is up to date; the photo contest is up and running and ready for submittals; the raffle will be like last year, including facilitation by Par Singhaseni; and we have already coordinated with David Hedrick at TSA who will electronically host us again in 2022. Ed LaRue will be serving as Meeting Chair again this year. **Ken MacDonald and Michael Vamstad, who are presenting, need to get abstracts to Kristin Berry as soon as possible.**

H. Awards Committee's Reports: Kristin Berry reported she has met with Bruce Palmer, who is working on a draft description of a new award acknowledging person(s) or entities who have made significant changes towards the proactive management of tortoises.

I. Agency Coordinating Committee's Report: Cristina Jones reported that, although she has had several conversations with U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service (USFWS) personnel about agency coordination, there has been no recent activity by this committee.

J. Corresponding Secretary's Report: Becky Jones reported mail is typical, with one Symposium registration received, a few environmental projects, and questions about pet tortoises.

K. Membership Committee's Report: As we transition to Halle Kohn as the incoming chair of this committee, Mari Quillman provided an electronic version of the Membership Committee report dated 10/21/2021. According to that report, the Council has 790 Total members, 310 Active members, 472 members needing renewal, including 70 Lifetime members. **Mari Quillman and Halle Kohn will be working with our webmaster to transition Halle into her new role as committee chairperson.** There is a glitch that if someone pays for membership now (e.g., in October), it will lapse at the end of the year, and they would be identified as nonmembers at the Symposium.

L. Nominating Committee's Report: Mari Quillman is the new chair, reporting there has been no new activity. Treasurer and Corresponding Secretary (others?) are up for election at the Annual Business Meeting in 2022. Joe Probst is willing to continue as Treasurer and Becky Jones as Corresponding Secretary. It would be best to talk to Mari and/or Michael Tuma about potential Board members before contacting prospective candidates. With Greer's resignation, we are down to only 13 Board members and can accommodate up to 20 individuals, so Ed LaRue expressed the importance of finding new, committed Board members, not just committee members.

M. Ecosystems Advisory Committee's (EAC) Report: Ed LaRue reported that there were 14 projects identified all of which were reviewed by the Board in the reporting period between 8/14/2021 and 10/23/2021. Whereas most of these were typical projects on which we provided comments, it also included updates on the Center for Biological Diversity's lawsuit on which we are participating for the West Mojave route designation project, where Matthew J. Sanders, Clinical Supervising Attorney, Lecturer in Law, Stanford Law School submitted the formal complaint on 9/1/2021. We also learned that the California Fish and Game Commission decided to postpone its decision on uplisting the tortoises as Endangered, which was supposed to have been determined this month. Judy Hohman has taken the functional lead in working with members of Conserve Southwest Utah with regards to the Northern Corridor issue. **Kristin Berry will provide Ed LaRue and Halle Kohn with a standard paragraph documenting the elevated status of Mohave desert tortoise to "critically endangered" on the International Union for Conservation of Nature (IUCN) list, which can be used in EAC letters and the newsletter, respectively.**

N. Media Committee's Report: Michael Tuma said there was little to report, as he is busy in the field every day. He expects a shift in his workload in January (new baby!) and would like to have someone else chair this committee. Halle Kohn suggested starting a new way to communicate through What's App or similar format. **Judy Hohman and Michael Tuma will review Halle's draft of the next newsletter, which is due by November 21.** They will have comments to Halle by November 24 so it can be distributed by November 30. Halle would like to feature TSA, and **Cristina Jones will provide a TSA contact to Halle Kohn.** Judy Hohman indicated we have not filled recent Board vacancies and we need to be more aggressive in filling them. **During the Symposium and perhaps the Workshop, Ed LaRue will announce our need of new Board members.** • **Mari Quillman will develop a few slides that can be used during the Workshop and Symposium to announce our outstanding needs at the Board level.** We should also solicit volunteers through social media. We may want to have new people on committees, and there was discussion as to whether someone can chair a committee and not be a Board member. **Mari Quillman will talk with Bruce Palmer about having non-Board member committee chairs.**

O. Education and Outreach Committee's Report: Maggie Fusari reported that Ed LaRue was contacted about attending the Western Section of The Wildlife Society in February 2021. Ed LaRue will develop an estimated cost both with and without a cargo van that can be considered before the next Board meeting. He should have membership forms, a sign with social media tags, a QR Code that allows them to interface with the Council, opportunities for sponsoring the Symposium, and the usual Council products available to purchase. **Halle Kohn will produce the QR Code and work with Michael Tuma to produce a sign with social media tags.**

P. Grants Committee's Report: Michael Tuma and Joe Probst reported we have been given a \$10,000 grant by Southern California Edison (SCE) (with the specific function of the grant to be determined). **Michael Tuma will provide a blurb to Halle Kohn for the newsletter on this SCE grant.** • **Michael Tuma will be announcing the availability of the Morafka Award in the next week-or-so.**

Q. Fundraising Committee Report: **Greer Dolby will review Go Fund Me, Amazon Smile, and Network for Good accounts for status updates.** Given her impending resignation, we will need someone to fill the vacancy to chair this committee. The committee is comprised of Michael Tuma, Judy Hohman, and Mari Quillman. Greer Dolby and Michael Tuma may be able to help in a limited non-chair capacity on this committee. **Greer Dolby, Michael Tuma, Judy Hohman, and Mari Quillman will have a coordination meeting to discuss the future function of this committee.**

R. Mexico Coordination Committee. Michael Vamstad reported this committee has not been very active. **Michael Vamstad is working on translating materials into Spanish concerning the 2022 Symposium.**

S. Training Program Committee Report:

a. Introductory Training Course Committee's Report: Maggie Fusari reported there are two components this year, including a virtual "indoor," two-day event with usual instructors scheduled for October 29 and 30, and two independent outdoor sessions scheduled in Ridgecrest on November 5 and 6. There are 130 students signed up for the indoor course, and 60 students for each of the field workshop sessions. All instructors need to set the example for social distancing. Pete Woodman said we will use nitrile gloves so that things like scats and carcasses can be safely handled and passed among students. Pete indicated his overall cost will be about \$700 to \$800. We should pay TSA *this year* for the Workshop, followed by a second payment for the Symposium *next year*. **Motion made (Judy Hohman), seconded (Joe Probst), and unanimously approved to provide a contribution of \$2,000 to Turtle Survival Alliance to support the Workshop.**

b. Advanced Training Courses Committee's Report: Cristina Jones reported there has been no recent activity by this committee. She has had several conversations with USFWS personnel about agency coordination. Cristina Jones continues to work on revising the USFWS 2009 Field Manual and to discuss a potential Health Assessment in 2022.

T. COVID and Public Health Policy: Michael Tuma said that he worked on a draft of this policy about 18 months ago. Maggie Fusari said that a specific set of instructions will be provided to all Workshop participants, that it will be up to Pete Woodman, Joe Probst, and Ed LaRue as Council representatives at the Workshop to implement/enforce the instructions.


U. Strategic Planning Committee Report: Nothing to report in Ken MacDonald's absence.

NEW BUSINESS

V. Online Store: Mari Quillman indicated that we need photographs and an inventory of available items to set up this store. **Joe Probst will take an inventory of all products before the Workshop.** •
• **Mari Quillman will seek volunteers to produce photographs and write up swag descriptions.**

Adjourn: The meeting was adjourned by Chairperson-elect, Mari Quillman, at 12:30 pm.

Draft minutes were recorded, distributed on 10/23/2021, modified with board member review and input, then respectfully submitted as this final version by Ed LaRue, Recording Secretary.



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

Ecosystems Advisory Committee Report DTC Board Meeting of 23 October 2021

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

1. Expand Critical Habitat for the Threatened Mojave Population of the Desert Tortoise (4 states)

6/14/2021 – On this date, Ed LaRue receives a draft petition from Defenders of Wildlife to revise/expand critical habitat as given above with a request for personal review, to which Ed responds with comments on **6/29/2021**. Ed contacted Jeff Aardahl of Defenders in early October to express our commitment to the effort, but nothing new to report at this time.

2. Bellefield Solar Project (Kern Co, CA)

7/8/2021 – On this date, Ed LaRue receives a link from Becky Jones that this project is forthcoming, which Ed forwards to the Board for participation on **7/29/2021**, with a due date of **8/16/2021**. The draft comment letter is distributed on **7/13/2021**. With eight endorsements and one recusal, the final letter is submitted to Kern County and State Clearinghouse on **8/15/2021**.

3. Formal complaint letter for West Mojave Route Designation decision (West Mojave, CA)

3/9/2021 to 4/11/2021 – Please see the EAC report dated 5/1/2021 for all actions taken between 3/9 and 4/11/2021, which among other things, includes our decision to support Center for Biological Diversity (CBD) intent to sue BLM for their recent decisions on the West Mojave Plan. On **8/11/2021**, Matthew Sanders, Clinical Supervising Attorney, Lecturer in Law, Stanford Law School representing CBD sends the draft formal complaint letter, asking the Council to provide comments by **9/3/2021**. With 8 endorsements and 2 recusals, Ed LaRue sends the revised formal complaint letter to Matthew J. Sanders, Clinical Supervising Attorney, Lecturer in Law, Stanford Law School on **9/1/2021**. The formal complaint was filed on **9/16/2021**, and distributed on that date.

4. Draft EIR for Arica Solar and Victory Pass Solar Projects (Riverside Co, CA)

8/11/2021 – On this date, Becky Jones provided a link to the draft EIR for the projects, which encompass about 2,724 acres on BLM lands in Riverside County, north of I-10, about 5.5 miles east of Desert Center, with comments due **9/20/21**. EIR can be found at www.wildlife.ca.gov/Notices. The draft letter was circulated to the Board on **9/16/2021**, and with six endorsements was submitted on **9/17/2021**.

5. Interstate 11 Final Tier 1 Environmental Impact Statement (Arizona)

8/12/2021 – When Ed LaRue receives the link to this EIS on **8/12/2021**, he forwards it to Maggie Fusari who said she would work on a comment letter, which is due **8/16/2021**. Thanks to Maggie, the final letter is submitted on **8/15/2021**.

6. Draft Environmental Impact Report (EIR) for Oberon Renewable Energy Project (Riverside Co, CA)

8/13/2021 – On this date, Aspen Environmental provides links to the environmental documents, which is distributed to the Board on the same date, with comments due on **9/27/2021**. The draft comment letter is distributed to the Board on **9/18/2021**, and with six endorsements and no recusals, was submitted to the agencies on **9/22/2021**.

7. Proposed Secretarial Order on Combating the Extinction Crisis (National)

9/13/2021 – On this date, Ed LaRue receives a request from Stephanie Kurose of Center for Biological Diversity (CBD) asking the Council to cosign a letter, described above, which was distributed to the Board on **9/14/2021**. With eight immediate endorsements, Ed lets CBD know that we are willing cosigners on **9/15/2021**.

8. Jean/Roach Dry Lake Special Recreation Management Area (Clark Co, NV)

8/17/2021 – On this date, Jeff Aardahl of Defenders of Wildlife provides a link to this project, but there is no indication when comments are due, so the link and the draft letter are distributed to the Board on **9/14/2021**. With 10 endorsements, the approved letter is submitted on **9/16/2021**.

9. Ivins City Recreation, Public Works, and Cemetery Project (Ivins City, UT)

8/20/2021 – On this date, BLM contacts us directly with the draft Environmental Assessment for this 200-acre project in Ivins, Utah, which is distributed on **9/14/2021**, and is due on **9/18/2021**. With 10 endorsements, the final letter was submitted on **9/16/2021**.

10. CDM-1 Placer Bonanza Gulch Mine in El Paso Mountains (Kern County, CA)

8/20/2021 – On this date, BLM contacts us directly with the draft Environmental Assessment for this mine site expansion in Kern County, CA, which is distributed on **9/14/2021**. Unable to determine due date. The draft letter is distributed to the Board on **9/15/2021**. With seven endorsements, the final letter is submitted on **9/16/2021**.

11. Bureau of Land Management solicits initial public input on updating regulations for rights-of-way and renewable energy (National)

8/31/2021 – The link to upcoming talking sessions, scheduled September 14 through 23, is provided on 8/31/2021 and distributed to the Board on **9/14/2021**. There are no documents to review at this time, so the ability to provide feedback will require participation, which Ed LaRue does at the 4 pm session on **9/14/2021**. There is no activity currently, but by participating in the webinar, the Council is now on the list for future information on this issue, which is expected to go public in 2022.

13. NGO Action Alert: Sign on Letter in Support of Wildlife Recovery and Public Lands Restoration Provisions for Reconciliation (National)

9/22/2021 – On this date, we receive this action alert with an opportunity to sign on to a letter with Western Watersheds. Maggie Fusari took the lead on this issue, soliciting and garnering five endorsements, so she contacted Western Watersheds Project on **9/27/2021** to let them know the Council is a cosigner.

14. Chicken Springs and Planet Allotments Border Cattleguard (Lake Havasu, AZ)

10/6/2021 – We receive an email from Western Watersheds Project (Cyndi Tuell) on **10/6/2021** with their letter on the project, including a list of affected interests that does not include the Council. The draft letter is distributed to the Board on **10/13/2021**, and submitted to BLM with 5 endorsements on **10/14/2021**.

**Ecosystems Advisory Committee
Summary Table from 8/14/2021 to 10/23/2021**

Current date for this latest table revision is: 10/23/2021

		Dates (2021)				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														
No.	Title	Rec'd	Dist	Due	Sent	BJ	BP	CJ	EL	GD	HK	JH	JP	KB	KM	MF	MQ	MT	MV	PW
1	Expand critical habitat	N/A		N/A				R 10/23	Y/A 6/29											
2	Bellefield Solar	7/8	8/13	8/16	8/15	Y 8/15		R 10/23	Y/A 8/13		Y 8/15	Y/PI 8/14	Y 8/15		R 8/14	Y 8/15	Y 8/15	Y/PI 8/15	Y 8/20	
3	CBD WEMO lawsuit	8/11	8/13	9/3	9/1	Y 8/30	Y 8/30	R 10/23	Y 8/29			Y/PI 8/29	Y 8/30	R 8/29		Y 8/29	Y/PI 8/30		R 8/31	Y/PI 8/29
4	Arica and Victory Pass Solar	8/11	8/13	9/20	9/17			R 10/23	Y/A 9/16			Y/PI 9/17	Y 9/17			Y 9/17	Y 9/17		Y 9/21	Y 9/17
5	Interstate 11 EIS	8/12	8/12	8/16	8/15	Y 8/16		R 10/23	Y/PI 8/15			Y/PI 8/15	Y 8/15			Y/A 8/15			Y 8/20	Y/PI 8/15
6	Oberon Solar Project	8/13	8/13	9/27	9/22	Y/PI 9/21		R 10/23	Y/A 9/18			Y/PI 9/20	Y 9/19			Y 9/20				Y/PI 9/20
7	CBD executive order letter	9/13	9/14	9/24	9/15	Y 9/15		R 10/23	Y 9/13		Y 9/15	Y 9/14	Y 9/14		Y 9/15	Y 9/14	Y 9/14	Y 9/14	Y 9/15	Y 9/14
8	Jean/Roach Dry Lake OHV	8/17	9/14	??	9/16	Y 9/15		R 10/23	Y/A 9/14		Y 9/15	Y 9/15	Y 9/15		Y 9/16	Y 9/15	Y 9/15		Y 9/15	Y/PI 9/15
9	Ivins City, UT Project	8/20	9/14	9/18	9/16	Y 9/16		R 10/23	Y/A 9/15		Y 9/16	Y 9/16	Y 9/16	Y 9/16	Y 9/16		Y 9/16		Y 9/16	Y 9/16
10	CDM-1 Bonanza Gulch Mine	8/20	9/14	??	9/16	Y 9/15		R 10/23	Y/A 9/15		Y 9/16		Y 9/15	Y 9/16		Y 9/15	Y 9/16		Y 9/16	Y 9/16
11	Solar energy regulations webinar	8/31	9/14	9/26	N/A	We are now on the contact list, and can expect to participate sometime in 2022 when documents are available														
13	NGO Action Alert	9/22	9/22	9/27	9/27			R 10/23	Y 9/22			Y 9/23	Y 9/23		Y 9/26	Y/PI 9/22				
14	Chicken Springs	10/6	10/13	10/14	10/14	Y 10/14		R 10/23	Y/A 10/13			Y/PI 10/13	Y 10/14	Y 10/13		Y 10/14			Y 10/23	

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, **MF** = Maggie Fusari, **MQ** = Mari Quillman, **MT** = Michael Tuma, **MV** = Michel Vamstad, **PW** = Pete Woodman