

Final Final Final

Desert Tortoise Council Minutes of the Board of Directors Meeting

September 29, 2024
Zoom Online Meeting

CALL TO ORDER

The meeting was called to order by Chairperson, Mari Quillman at 10:00 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, Maggie Fusari, Mari Quillman, Michael Tuma, Becky Jones, Joe Probst, Max Havelka, Luke Basulto, Rick Applegate. **Absent:** Mary Lane Poe, Ed LaRue, Bruce Palmer, Operations Manager-David Hedrick. **Guests:** None.

A. Welcome/Announcements/Introductions.

B. Approval of Meeting Minutes of 9/27/24: 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 final.**

C. Review of Board Actions since Last Board Meeting: None have been identified since the last Board meeting on 9/27/2024.

D. Special Discussion Items: None were identified.

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 11/9/2024.

OFFICER/COMMITTEE REPORTS

F. Treasurer's Report: Treasurer, Joe Probst summarized an electronic version of the Treasurer's Report dated 9/27/2024, which is footnoted below¹. **Motion made (Ken MacDonald), seconded (Max Havelka), and unanimously approved to accept the Treasurer's Report as final.**

G. Corresponding Secretary's Report: Becky Jones summarized emails, hard copy mail, and electronic correspondence from her report previously sent to the Board.

H. Membership Committee's Report: Chair position open, so no report today.

¹ <https://www.dropbox.com/scl/fi/yynmv38vk1i9060gxzuch/Year-to-Date-Date-treasurer-Report-9-27-24.xlsx?rikey=lxdxgd2ir30zs7tjsb1ej0yp4&dl=0>

I. Nominating Committee's Report: Ken MacDonald reported there has been no activity.

J. Ecosystems Advisory Committee's (EAC) Report: The EAC report is attached. Judy Hohman reported that the committee considered 23 projects and sent a total of 19 comment or co-signed letters.

K. Media Committee's Report: Chair position open, so no report today.

L. Strategic Planning Committee Report: No report.

M. Grants Committee's Report: Invitations to apply for the Morafka Grant are being updated on the website by committee chair, Michael Tuma.

N. Agency Coordinating Committee's Report: USFWS leadership and Council committee members are arranging a meeting.

O. Mexican Tortoise Conservation Committee (MTCC): Pete Woodman reported on a positive meeting with Sevilleta National Wildlife Refuge where the Council provided tortoise training so USFWS could affix transmitters and track Bolson tortoises from the Armendaris Ranch to the Refuge.

P. Training Program Committee Report:

1. Introductory Training Course Committee's Report: Maggie Fusari updated the Board that planning is moving along smoothly for the October indoor course and November outdoor workshop.

2. Advanced Training Courses Committee's Report: Mary Lane Poe is working with Cristina Jones on setting up an advanced course, potentially as a Health Assessment Training refresher.

Q. Education and Outreach Committee's Report: Maggie Fusari summarized her report previously sent to Board.

R. Annual Symposium Program Committee's Report: Kristin Berry has been reporting to the subcommittee on a biweekly basis.

S. Fundraising Committee Report: Ken MacDonald summarized his report previously sent to Board. David Hedrick is planning two Drink Beer and Save Tortoises Events (Henderson in October and Ridgecrest in November) and expanding social media outreach during Tortoise Week. **Motion made (Ken MacDonald), seconded (Judy Hohman), and unanimously approved to accept the proposal sent by Just Write Grants to prepare approximately eight grants in the coming year.**

T. Awards Committee's Reports: Kristin Berry discussed eminently eligible candidates that have not submitted reports and are thus ineligible. Morafka Award coordination is underway.


U. Operations Manager Report: There was no report in David Hendrick's absence.

NEW BUSINESS: None were identified.

Adjourn: The meeting was adjourned by Chairperson, Mari Quillman, following a motion by Kristin Berry and seconded by Joe Probst at 11:35 am PST.

Draft minutes were recorded by Ken MacDonald, Board Member at Large, subsequently reviewed as to form by Ed LaRue, Recording Secretary, submitted for approval to all Board members on 10/16/2024, and approved as final with one amendment on 11/9/2024.

Ken MacDonald/for

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read "Ed LaRue, Jr.", is written over a light blue rectangular background. The signature is cursive and somewhat stylized.

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

Ecosystems Advisory Committee Report DTC Board Meeting of 29 September 2024

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

1a. Translocation of tortoises out of Western Training Area of Ft Irwin – with Defenders (San Bernardino)

On **6/27/2024**, Lisa Belenky of Center for Biological Diversity sends the notice to us, with a deadline of **7/27/2024**. On **7/2/2024**, Ed LaRue receives a draft letter from Jeff Aardahl asking us to cosign his letter, which he immediately reviewed. The letter subsequently received from Aardahl is circulated to the Board on **7/5/2024**, and Ed lets Aardahl know we are cosigners on **7/9/2024** with nine endorsements. Aardahl submits the letter on **7/24/2024**.

1b. Translocation of tortoises out of Western Training Area of Ft Irwin – with Defenders (San Bernardino)

As with 2a, on **6/27/2024**, Lisa Belenky of Center for Biological Diversity sends the notice to us, with a deadline of **7/27/2024**. On **7/24/2024**, Ed distributes the draft letter to the Board, independent reviewers, and Roger Dale, and submits it to the Army on **7/27/2024** with eight endorsements.

2. Grants and Cooperative Agreements Program Regulations (National)

On **6/21/2024**, Jeff Aardahl provides information for this project, which has a due date of **8/5/2024**. After being edited by Ed LaRue, the draft letter is circulated on **7/19/2024** and Aardahl is informed that we officially endorsed the letter when six Board endorsements (and one recusal) were received by **7/21/2024**.

3. Socorro Solar (La Paz Co, AZ)

On **6/28/2024**, the BLM's consultant sends a link inviting scoping comments on this project, with a due date of **8/7/2024**. The draft letter is distributed to the Board on **7/31/2024** and submitted to the BLM on **8/3/2024** with eight endorsements.

4a. Restore habitat and connectivity in Ivanpah Valley, Nevada

On **7/10/2024**, we receive links from several third parties and the BLM. Later that day, Jeff Aardahl of Defenders of Wildlife asks us to coauthor their letter, which we agree to do. His draft letter is circulated to the Board on **7/18/2024**. Ed lets him know on **8/2/2024** that with five endorsements, the Council is a willing coauthor. Aardahl submits the letter on **8/2/2024**.

4b. Restore habitat and connectivity in Ivanpah Valley, Nevada

After coauthoring the above letter with Defenders, Ed LaRue drafts an additional letter on behalf of the Council, which is distributed on **8/5/2024** and submitted to the BLM on **8/8/2024** with seven endorsements.

5. Muddy Mountains Travel Management Plan (NV)

On **7/17/2024**, we receive a link from Jeff Aardahl (and not the BLM) announcing this travel management plan, which has a due date of **8/16/2024**. With 10 endorsements, the final letter is submitted on **8/16/2024**.

6. Endangered species impacts in the Manchin/Barrasso permitting reform bill (National)

On **7/29/2024**, Stephanie Kurose of the Center for Biological Diversity provided a letter she asked the Council to cosign². After receiving 11 endorsements and one recusal from Board members and Roger Dale of the Desert Tortoise Preserve Committee (DTPC), Ed lets Kurose know on **7/30/2024** that both groups are willing cosigners.

² https://www.dropbox.com/scl/fi/zcnfgexik9m25c7d4aaqu/Endangered-Species-Impacts-of-the-Energy-Permitting-Reform-Act_final.7-30-2024.docx?rlkey=s8cna069rgdp73tjf04v9v1lp&dl=0

7. Support for the Pahrump Valley-Old Spanish Trail ACEC (Clark Co, NV)

On **7/29/2024**, Kevin Emmerich of Basin and Range Watch provided a letter asking that the Council cosign the letter to endorse support for the ACEC nomination. After providing minor edits, Ed LaRue distributed the letter of support on **7/31/2024** and informed Emmerich on **8/2/2024** that we are willing cosigners when 10 endorsements were received.

8. Senator Padilla on Castle Mountains National Monument (San Bernardino Co, CA)

On **8/1/2024**, Becky Jones receives a request from Senator Padilla's office to support a bill that would minimize hunting and other human pressures in the Castle Mountains National Monument, which is distributed to the Board on **8/2/2024**. With eight endorsements, we sign a form letter supporting the Senator's bill on **8/3/2024**.

9. Gold Discovery Group (Kern Co, CA)

On **8/1/2024**, we receive a letter from Center for Biological Diversity asking us to cosign their letter, which they want asap. With six endorsements, Ed LaRue lets Lisa Belenky know that we are willing cosigners on **8/3/2024**.

10. Elisabeth Solar (Yuma Co, AZ)

On **7/26/2024**, Judy Hohman provides a link to this project, which has a due date of **8/26/2024**. An official post card from BLM is received snail mail on **8/2/2024**. The draft letter is distributed on **8/21/2024**. The final letter is submitted to the BLM on **8/26/2024** with eight endorsements and one recusal.

11. Support for 2024 Coyote Springs Wildlife Crossings Pilot Program Grant Application (Clark Co, NV)

On **8/8/2024**, we receive a request from Kristi Holcomb of Nevada Department of Transportation (NDOT) asking us to draft a letter endorsing NDOT as the recipient of grant money that would allow them to construct a tortoise fence along ± 34 miles of US 93 adjacent to critical Mojave desert tortoise habitat, with a requested due date of **8/28/2024**. The draft letter is distributed to the Board on **8/8/2024**, and submitted on **8/12/2024** with only four endorsements.

12. Tassi-Gold Butte Wild Burro Gather Plan (AZ)

On **8/9/2024**, the BLM contacts us with a link to available documents for comments, which are due by **9/9/2024**. The final letter is submitted to the BLM and NPS on **9/9/2024** with eight endorsements.

13. Mining exemption rulemaking at State Mining and Geology Board (CA)

On **8/12/2024**, the Center for Biological Diversity (CBD) asks that the Board cosign a letter that would seek better habitat protection through heightened project review (see Gold Discovery Group letter), with a due date of **8/13/2024**. With six endorsements, Ed informs CBD of our endorsement on **8/13/2024**.

14. Broadband Communications Site in Morongo Valley (San Bernardino Co, CA)

On **8/23/2024**, we receive notice from the BLM for this project, which has a due date of **9/16/2024**. Ed attends the virtual public meeting on **9/5/2024**, which has 43 people online and maybe twice that many in the room at the public meeting (this for a 2-acre impact area!). The draft letter is circulated to the Board on **9/11/2024**, and submitted to the BLM on **9/16/2024** with only four endorsements.

15. Onyx Ranch SVRA Draft Wildlife Habitat Protection Plan (Kern Co, CA)

On **8/26/2024**, we receive a notice of this project from a third party about the California Off-Highway Motor Vehicle Recreation Commission (OHMVR) project, with a public meeting scheduled for **9/9/2024** and final comment letter due **10/9/2024**. Ed LaRue attends the virtual meeting, distributes a draft letter on **9/23/2024**, and submits the letter on **9/26/2024** with five endorsements and one recusal.

16. BLM Mojave Trails National Monument Management Plan (San Bernardino, Riverside Cos, CA)

On **8/23/2024**, we receive a link from AECOM with an attached letter from the BLM, stating that the due date was August 16, they will receive comments through **9/6/2024**. The draft letter is distributed to the Board (first one not sent to independent reviewers, as they have been unresponsive for months), and submitted to the BLM on **9/6/2024** with seven endorsements.

17. Direct Sale of Public Lands in Barstow (San Bernardino Co, CA)

On **8/28/2024**, we receive a link from a third party announcing this project, which has a due date of **10/15/2024**.

<https://www.federalregister.gov/documents/2024/08/28/2024-19256/direct-sale-of-public-lands-in-barstow-san-bernardino-county-california>

18. Easley Renewable Energy Project Environmental Assessment (Riverside Co, CA)

On **8/30/2024**, we receive a link to this project from the project proponent, with a due date of **9/20/2024**. With only five endorsements and one recusal, the draft letter is submitted to the BLM on **9/20/2024**.

19. San Manuel Solar Power Plant with Battery Energy Storage System (Pinal Co, AZ)

On **8/27/2024**, David Hedrick receives an inquiry from a concerned citizen, which he forwards to the EAC, with Maggie Fusari serving as the lead contact (see email of **8/31/2024**). There is no due date, but a letter is written, distributed on @@, and submitted to the Arizona lead agency on @@ with @@ endorsements.

<https://mail.aol.com/d/folders/1/messages/AHzUCWAQcBK6ZtPHwAI6UHp4mbg>

20. Bonanza Solar Project Draft EIS (Clark and Nye Cos, NV)

On **9/6/2024**, the BLM provides us with the notice of this Draft EIS, which has a 90-day comment period, estimated to be **12/6/2024**.

<https://eplanning.blm.gov/eplanning-ui/project/2020905/510>

21. Agua Dulce/Squabble Mine Water Distribution Rehabilitation (Ironwood Forest Nat'l Monument, AZ)

On **9/20/2024**, Cyndi Tuell of Western Watersheds Projects provides a link to this project, which has a due date on **9/28/2024**. With seven endorsement, the letter was submitted on **9/27/2024**.

<https://eplanning.blm.gov/eplanning-ui/project/2034511/510>

22. Copper Rays Solar Project Draft EIS and RMP Amendment (Nye County, NV)

On **9/20/2024**, we receive a link from the BLM, with a due date of **12/19/2024**.

<https://eplanning.blm.gov/eplanning-ui/project/2019523/510>

23. Ranegras Plains Energy Center Project (La Paz Co, AZ)

On **9/11/2024**, we receive a notice from the project proponent, with a suspected due date of **10/22/2024**.

<https://ranegrasplainsenergycenter.com/>

**Ecosystems Advisory Committee
Summary Table from 7/20/2024 to 9/29/2024**

Current date for this latest table revision is: 9/26/2024

Dates are for 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	JH	JP	LB	KB	KM	MF	MH	MP	MQ	MT	PW	RA
1a	Ft Irwin - Defenders	6/27	7/5	7/27	7/24	Y/PI 7/6		Y/PI 7/5	Y/PI 7/6	Y 7/9		Y 7/9	Y 7/8	Y 7/5				Y 7/5	Y 7/8	Y 7/8
1b	Fort Irwin Translocation	6/27	7/24	7/27	7/27	7/27		A/Y 7/24		Y 7/26		Y/PI 7/26		Y 7/26		Y 7/26		Y 7/27	Y/PI 7/25	Y 7/27
2	Grants Program	6/21	7/19	8/5	7/21	Y 7/19		Y/PI 7/19	Y/PI 7/20	Y 7/19		R 7/19						Y 7/19		Y 7/20
3	Socorro Solar	6/28	7/31	8/7	8/3	Y 8/2		Y/PI 7/31	A/Y 7/30	Y 8/5			Y 8/2	Y 8/2		Y 8/2	Y 8/2	Y 8/5	Y 8/2	
4a	Ivanpah connectivity	7/10	8/2	8/10	8/2			Y/PI 7/18	Y 8/2	Y 8/5				Y 8/2		R 8/4	Y 8/2	Y 8/5		Y 8/2
4b	Ivanpah connectivity	7/10	8/2	8/10	8/8	Y 8/6		A/Y 8/5	Y/PI 8/8	Y 8/6				Y 8/5				Y 8/5		Y 8/6
5	Muddy Mtns TMP	7/17	8/14	8/16	8/16	Y 8/15		Y/PI 8/15	A/Y 8/14	Y 8/15			Y 8/14	Y 8/14		Y 8/16		Y 8/14	Y/PI 8/15	Y 8/16
6	FESA reform bill	7/29	7/29	7/30	7/30	Y 7/29		Y 7/29	Y 7/29	Y 7/29		R 7/30	Y 7/29	Y 7/29	Y 7/29		Y 7/29	Y 7/29	Y 7/30	Y 7/29
7	Pahrump ACEC	7/29	7/31	8/5	8/3	Y 8/2		Y/PI 7/30	Y 8/2	Y 8/5			Y 8/2	Y 8/2		Y 8/2	Y 8/2	Y 8/5	Y 8/2	
8	Castle Mountains	8/1	8/2	NA	8/3	Y 8/2		Y 8/2	Y 8/2	Y 8/5			Y 8/2	Y 8/2		Y 8/2	Y 8/2	Y 8/5	Y 8/2	
9	Gold Discovery Group	8/1	8/2	ASAP	8/3	Y 8/2		Y 8/2	Y 8/2	Y 8/5			Y 8/2	Y 8/2				Y 8/5	Y 8/2	
10	Elisabeth Solar	7/26	8/21	8/26	8/26	Y/PI 8/22		A/Y 8/21		Y 8/21			R 8/21	Y 8/21		Y 8/22		Y 8/21	Y 8/22	Y 8/22
11	Coyote Springs	8/8	8/8	8/12	8/12	Y 8/13		A/Y 8/8	Y/PI 8/9	Y 8/9						Y 8/12		Y 8/8		
12	Wild Burro Gather	8/9	9/7	9/9	9/9	Y 9/9		Y/PI 9/9	A/Y 9/7	Y 9/8			Y 9/9	Y 9/8		Y/PI 9/8		Y 9/8	Y 9/9	Y 9/9
13	Mining exemption	8/12	8/12	8/12	8/12	Y 8/13		Y/PI 8/12	Y/PI 8/12	Y 8/13				Y 8/12		Y 8/12	R 8/13	Y 8/12	Y 8/13	Y 8/12
14	Morongo Valley tower	8/16	9/11	9/16	9/16	Y 9/14		A/Y 9/11	Y/PI 9/12							R 9/9		Y 9/12		
15	Onyx Ranch	8/27	9/23	10/9	9/26	Y 9/25		A/Y 9/23		Y 9/24		R 9/26						Y 9/24	Y 9/24	
16	Mojave Trails	8/23	9/5	9/6	9/6	Y 9/7		A/Y 9/5	Y/PI 9/5					Y 9/5		Y 9/6		Y 9/5	Y/PI 9/6	Y/PI 9/5

17	Barstow BLM land sales	8/28		10/15															
18	Easley Solar	8/30	9/17	9/20	9/20	Y 9/19		A/Y 9/17	Y/PI 9/18	Y 9/18					R 9/18			Y 9/18	
19	San Manuel solar	8/27		None															
20	Bonanza Solar	9/6		12/6															
21	Agua Dulce	9/20	9/26	9/28	9/27	Y 9/27		Y 9/26	A/Y 9/17				Y 9/26		Y 9/27		Y 9/26	Y 9/7	Y 9/27
22	Copper Rays	9/20		12/19															
23	Ranegras Plains	9/11		10/11?															

BJ = Becky Jones, **BP** = Bruce Palmer, **EL** = Ed LaRue, **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