

Final Final Final

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

**6 June 2020
Zoom Online Meeting**

CALL TO ORDER

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

A. Welcome/Announcements/Introductions: We logged into the Zoom session as early as 09:30 am to chat and informally visit with one another.

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

a. Meeting Minutes of 4 April 2020: Ed LaRue prepared draft minutes at the last Zoom Board meeting, dated 4 April 2020, which were distributed, reviewed, and approved today as final with no changes. **Motion made (Joe Probst), seconded (Judy Hohman), and unanimously approved to accept the draft minutes as amended to be final.**

C. Review of Board Actions since Last Board Meeting: There were no Board actions since the April Board meeting.

D. Next Meeting Date: The next meeting of the Board of Directors will be a Zoom meeting, between 10:00 a.m. and approximately 4:00 p.m., on August 22, 2020. The meeting after that will be on November 21, 2020.

OFFICER/COMMITTEE REPORTS

E. Treasurer's Report: An electronic version of the Treasurer's Report was distributed before the meeting by Joe Probst. Income was \$94,822.17, with expenses at \$153,193.52. As of 6/5/2020, our total assets are \$109,188.65. There was a \$3,500 deposit at Excalibur for the 2020 Symposium that was not acknowledged and has been rectified. The total cost was \$109,000+/- for the Symposium, which was between \$18,000 to \$19,000 over budget (at the last Board meeting, Joe felt that it could have been as much as \$30,000 over). In the absence of a full Introductory Course this year, we will have reduced income, but meeting remotely has saved us about \$7,000/Board meeting. **Motion made (Maggie Fusari), seconded (Cristina Jones), and unanimously approved to accept the Treasurer's Report as final.**

F. Agency Coordinating Committee's Report: Cristina Jones provided her report before this meeting. Due to COVID 19, we cannot physically meet, so no in person meetings are being planned. [Cristina Jones will be working with individual Board members to set up webinars to replace these meetings.](#)

G. Membership Committee's Report: Mari Quillman provided the report, which was discussed. Total members include 699 members, 377 active members (a record number of active members), and 317 with memberships lapsed or overdue. Greer Dolby provided graphs of membership statistics, which reveals there are about an equal number of men and women members; members are predominantly white; most minorities are in the active category; and members are mostly from California, followed by Nevada, then Arizona. We may be able to use these data to target certain groups such as lapsed members or perhaps under-represented regions. Most lapsed members are likely students to the Introductory Course who did not renew memberships. There's no clear way to keep track of life members who have died. We may want to highlight lifetime members and solicit input from them for social media and the newsletter. [Greer Dolby will provide Kristin Berry with a list of lifetime members.](#) • [Mari Quillman plans to meet with the Membership Committee \(Judy Hohman, Halle Kohn, and Greer Dolby\) to discuss items](#) such as membership polls, recruitment, flyer for member benefits, working with other committees, and a few other items listed in her report.

H. Corresponding Secretary's Report: Becky Jones reported requests to provide website services, captive tortoises, training, and several National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA) documents. [Becky Jones will distribute the Board member contact spread sheet to be updated as needed.](#)

I. Nominating Committee's Report: Michael Tuma was not here, and Ken MacDonald and Bruce Palmer are the other members of this committee. [Ken MacDonald will follow up with Michael Tuma about prospective Board members \(Paul Delaney\).](#) Greer Dolby indicated this is a perfect time to invite prospective members to participate in virtual Board meetings.

J. Training Program Committee Report:

a. Introductory Training Course Committee's Report: Cristina Jones recently distributed the results of the review of the 2019 Introductory Course to Board members. Now is a good time to begin to build outlines for webinars, modules, and other courses for professional development and becoming authorized biologists. [Cristina Jones will provide Mari Quillman with summaries of these courses, and Mari will then send email blasts to our database members on availability of these courses.](#) Maggie Fusari reported the in-person Introductory Course will be cancelled this year due to the COVID 19 coronavirus, which gives us time to determine an alternative approach. There was discussion about providing one or more Zoom session presentations, without a field component (there could be subsequent trips). We could also do an ask-it-basket session for several hours, whether there is a formal course or not. Judy Hohman suggested there may be multiple sessions. This year, we plan to provide the indoor session, only, and need to be clear that this is not the typical course, there is no field component, no certificate, no test, etc. The course is normally \$345/student, and will likely be reduced.

b. Advanced Training Courses Committee's Report: Cristina Jones reported per the 2020 work plan, this committee plans to develop an on-line survey to assess interest in training courses, host a supervised practice course for the 2019 Health Assessment Training (HAT) participants, develop a HAT refresher course, develop a handling course, and finalize and implement recommendations from the report on Introductory Course review.

K. Ecosystems Advisory Committee's (EAC) Report: Ed LaRue reported that there were 21 projects identified and all but one reviewed by the Board in the reporting period between 4/4/2020 and 6/6/2020. Several members expressed their support of letters without comment as a vote of confidence in the letters as they are written. The BLM is also being commended for reaching out to the Council and informing us of impending projects.

L. Media Committee's Report: Halle Kohn provided her report earlier this morning. Since January, there have been more than 100 new followers on our Instagram account. [Halle Kohn is committing to a June 15 deadline for the next Newsletter](#), and will be asking several specific members for supplementary information. She talked to Michael Tuma about having a Newsletter coeditor to be sure all issues are published in a timely manner. [Halle Kohn will work with Mari Quillman to be sure a list of the Symposium sponsors is in this next newsletter.](#) • [Halle Kohn will also be sure there is a note that we now have a presence on Amazon Smile.](#) • [Maggie Fusari will be sure Halle Kohn has pertinent information about the 2020 Introductory Course.](#) Information needs to be provided by 6/12/2020. [Kristin Berry will provide Halle Kohn with obituaries for Phil Medica, Ron Marlow, and Peter Pritchard.](#) • [Halle Kohn will then provide a link to the newsletter to Mari Quillman and Michael Tuma for distribution to members and social media.](#) Given the recent death of a George Floyd in Minnesota, many environmental groups have joined the campaign of "Black Lives Matter," and most Board members with input felt we should provide a similar statement of the importance of minorities in desert tortoise conservation. [Halle Kohn will share our statement\(s\) to all Board members for our information](#) (for those members who do not access social media).

M. Education and Outreach Committee's Report: Maggie Fusari reported that since most events have been cancelled, there has been limited opportunity to participate in gatherings, such as schools and symposia.

N. Awards Committee's Reports: Kristin Berry reported she has been following new and ongoing research to identify awardees, and several have already been identified. [Halle Kohn will check the website to see that the 2020 awardees are listed in the Newsletter.](#)

O. Grants Committee's Report: Michael Tuma was not here, but so far, the responses to the Southern California Edison award have not fulfilled requirements of our grants guidelines, so we are pursuing new submittals.

P. Fundraising Committee Report: Greer Dolby provided a written report, indicating there was a recent meeting of this committee, and she continues accumulating pertinent statistics. She is pursuing more information on Introductory Course participation, creating merchandise for sponsors, on-demand manufacturing, etc. Thanks to Judy Hohman and Joe Probst for setting up an Amazon Smile account, which should be published in social media, emails, newsletters, etc. to take advantage of this account. [Greer Dolby will work with Maggie Fusari to determine numbers of attendees to the Introductory Course and with Cristina Jones for attendees to the Symposia.](#) • [Judy Hohman will provide Mari Quillman with specifics on the Amazon Smile account to be eblasted.](#)

Q. Mexico Coordination Committee. Michael Vamstad said there is nothing new to report.

R. Annual Symposium Program Committee's Report: Kristin Berry reported that she continues to work with Tracy Bailey about logistics. We need to let Tracy Bailey know by August or September whether we are cancelling the venue in St George, Utah. Kristin recommended that we consider cancelling the in-person event and begin planning a virtual Symposium. Discussion ensued: Cancellation will reduce costs; cannot socially distance in an auditorium setting; there are liability and safety issues; we will have more opportunities by February to perfect virtual presentations; if we go forward and have to cancel the Symposium, we could lose our \$2,550 deposit; the idea is to postpone the event, so if/when we get back together, we would still plan on St George, Utah; **Mari Quillman will communicate with The Wildlife Society and Cristina Jones will contact the Turtle Survival Alliance to see how they plan to perform their annually-scheduled symposia in virtual formats;** USGS requires that all employees and contractors have N95 masks and gloves for all contracted work; the Symposium would also likely be construed as nonessential travel, so many potential attendees would not be able to attend. A Health and Wellness policy has been developed and distributed to the Board. **Motion made (Joe Probst), seconded (Greer Dolby), and unanimously approved to postpone the in-person 2021 Symposium, to plan for and pursue a virtual Symposium, and to return to St George, Utah when we can gather again.** • **Mari Quillman will prepare a statement, and coordinate with Maggie Fusari, on preparing statements for both the Symposium and Introductory Course as discussed above.** • **Ken MacDonald will ensure that we return to the Health and Wellness policy for discussion and approval at the August Board meeting.**


S. Strategic Planning Committee Report: Bruce Palmer reported that there is nothing new to review on this issue. We will maintain this on the agenda for updates, revisiting it at the November Board meeting. **Halle Kohn will check the website to be sure the most recent Strategic Plan is posted.**

NEW BUSINESS

T. Executive Order Affecting the Federal Endangered Species Act (FESA) and NEPA: The executive order streamlines implementation of infrastructure without usual involvement of ESA and NEPA, so it is too early to know exactly how this order may affect our ability to provide input.

Adjourn: The meeting was adjourned by Chairperson, Ken MacDonald, at 2:20 pm.

Draft minutes were recorded, later distributed, and 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 6 June 2020

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

1. Joshua Tree National Park - 2020 Off-Highway Vehicle Restoration Grant Application (CA)
3/4/2020 – Ed LaRue receives a notice on **3/5/2020**, which he distributes to the Board (and Larry LaPré) on **3/16/2020**, with a deadline for comments of **5/4/2020**. The draft letter is circulated on **4/22/2020**. With nine approvals and one recusal, the final letter was submitted on **4/25/2020**.

2. Yellow Pine Solar Project (Clark County, NV)
3/20/20 – On **3/20/2020**, Jeff Aardahl of Defenders of Wildlife provides a link for this project, which is distributed to the Board on **3/31/2020**, with a due date of **5/4/2020**. Ed LaRue circulates a first draft of the letter on **4/25/2020** and a second draft on **4/28/2020**. With only four endorsements, the final letter was submitted on **5/1/2020**.

3. Spangler Hills Open Area Expansion Fences (San Bernardino County, CA)
3/17/2020 – Carrie Woods of the Ridgecrest BLM office sends a notice for the proposed project on **3/17/2020**, which Ed LaRue forwards to the Board on the same date, with a due date of **4/20/20**. The draft letter for this project is distributed to the Board for comment on **4/6/2020**. With nine endorsements, this letter was emailed to BLM on **4/15/2020**.

4. Sonoran Desert National Monument grazing amendment (60 miles southwest of Phoenix, AZ)
3/26/2020 – On **3/26/2020**, a Utah member provides a link for this project, which is distributed to the Board on **3/31/2020**, with a due date of **4/27/2020**. Ed LaRue sends link and several other comments on grazing in Arizona to the Board on **4/12/2020** in hopes of generating interest. The draft letter completed by Greer Dolby is circulated on **4/19/2020**. With eight endorsements, the final letter is submitted to BLM on **4/22/2020**.

5. BLM Letter of Support for DTPC's OHV Grant Request (Kern County, CA)
1/10/2020 – Ed LaRue receives a link to this project on **1/10/2020**, but the website was not functional when he distributed it to the Board on **1/12/2020**. On 1/17/2020, Larry LaPré responds that there will be meetings in February and March with comment opportunities through May. Several Board members said, at the least, we should draft a letter endorsing proposals by the Desert Tortoise Preserve Committee (DTPC). Deadline for comments in **5/1/2020**. The draft letter of support is distributed to the Board on 4/22/2020 (Earth Day). With 11 endorsements, the final letter was submitted on **4/25/2020**.

6. Eagle Crest AB2255 opposition letter (Riverside, CA)
4/24/2020 – Receive a request from Chris Clarke of National Parks Conservation Association (NPCA) asking the Council to sign-on to (another) letter opposing the Eagle Crest pump project. With six endorsements and one recusal, Ed LaRue lets Chris Clarke know on **4/24/2020** that the Council is a willing cosigner.

7. Southern California Edison Eldorado Lugo Mojave Project (California and Nevada)

4/17/2020 – We receive a letter from Joan Patrovsky, BLM Barstow, on **4/17/2020**, announcing the project. Then, Larry LaPré provided a link to the project on 4/23/2020. Ed LaRue distributes the information on **4/25/2020**, with the final comment letter due on **5/17/2020**. The draft letter is circulated on **5/9/2020** with a request for comments by **5/13/2020**. With six endorsements and two recusals, the final comment letter was submitted on **5/13/2020**.

8. Departments of the Air Force and the Navy Apply to Extend and Expand Military Withdrawal for Barry M. Goldwater Range (Southern Arizona)

4/20/2020 – We receive a link to this project from a third party on **4/20/2020**, which Ed LaRue distributes on **4/25/2020**, with comments due on **7/20/2020**. According to one Board member, this project would not affect tortoises, so it was removed from the active list.

9. Off-highway vehicle routes in the Vinagre Wash Special Management Area (El Centro, CA)

4/21/2020 – We receive a link to this project from a third party on **4/21/2020**, which Ed LaRue distributes on **4/25/2020**, with comments due on **5/21/2020**. Although Ed had indicated he could not comment due to work and other considerations, a second person did not step up, so no letter is submitted.

10. Silicon Exploration Plan of Operations (South-Central Nevada)

4/23/2020 – We receive a link to this project from a third party on **4/23/2020**, which Ed LaRue distributes on **4/25/2020**, with comments due on **6/5/2020**. Ed LaRue drafts and distributes the comment letter on the evening of **5/31/2020**. With six endorsements and one recusal, the final letter is submitted on **6/3/2020**.

11. Sign on request: wildlife & public land jobs in next COVID-19 stimulus bill (National)

5/11/2020 – We receive letter on **5/11/2020** from Stephanie Kurose of Center for Biological Diversity asking the Council to cosign this letter, with a due date of **5/13/2020**. With four endorsements, Ed let's Stephanie know on 5/13/2020 that the Council can be identified as a cosigner.

12. Petition to CDFW to legally remove common ravens from the DTRNA (Kern County, CA)

5/11/2020 – We receive an email from Ron Berger, Desert Tortoise Preserve Committee (DTPC) on **5/11/2020** requesting that the Council consider drafting a petition to CDFW to solicit depredation permits for common ravens at the Desert Tortoise Research Natural Area (DTRNA). Ed LaRue responds on **5/12/2020** that his work load will not allow for this in the immediate future, and forwards the request to another Board member.

13. AB 2736 Assembly bill for Eagle Crest Hydroelectric Project (Riverside Co., CA)

5/13/2020 – On **5/13/2020**, we receive request from Chris Clarke of National Parks Conservation Association (NPCA), asking us to be identified as a “me too” participant opposing this assembly bill that would facilitate development of this project, which the Council has routinely opposed, and which was immediately distributed.

14. Notice of Proposed Rulemaking: Title 14. Natural Resources. Grants and Cooperative Agreements Program Regulations (California)

5/20/2020 – We receive a letter from Jeff Aardahl on **5/20/2020**, distributed on the same date, asking the Council to cosign a letter by Defenders of Wildlife with the following goal: “The purpose of the Grants program is to provide well managed OHV Recreation by providing financial assistance to eligible agencies and organizations that develop, maintain, operate, expand, support, or contribute to well managed high quality OHV recreation areas, roads, and trails, and to responsibly maintain the wildlife soils and habitat of project areas in a manner that will sustain long term OHV Recreation in accordance with the legislative provisions and intent of the act commencing at PRC Section 5090.01.” A modified version of this letter addressing Judy’s comments was received and distributed on **5/22/2020**, at which time we let Aardahl know that we will cosign the letter.

15. Sonoran Desert National Monument grazing plan amendment (60 miles southwest of Phoenix, AZ)

5/8/2020 – We receive a link to this project from a third party on 5/8/2020. Although we had provided a letter authored by Greer Dolby including scoping comments on this project on 4/27/2020, it is determined on 5/20/2020 that this link solicits comments on the Draft EA, which are due on **6/6/2020**. Ed LaRue sends an email to Greer and the Board on **5/22/2020** asking her to consider drafting these comments. On **5/31/2020**, Greer responds with a draft letter that is distributed to the Board on the same date. With eight endorsements, the final letter is submitted on **6/3/2020**.

16. Environmental Assessment for a ROW to access a Caltrans habitat mitigation parcel (Kern Co, CA)

5/15/2020 – We receive a link from BLM, Ridgecrest announcing the availability of this EA, which is forwarded to the Board on 5/15/2020, with a deadline for comments of 6/1/2020. On **5/22/2020**, a Board member announces they are currently working on these comments. The draft letter is distributed to the Board on **5/24/2020**.

17. Seeking Support to Address Illegal Turtle Collection (International)

5/21/2020 – As co-chair of the national PARC Turtle Networking Team, Cristina Jones has been involved in drafting a call to action that raises awareness of the illegal turtle trade in North America, and is asking wildlife professionals and organizations to add their names in support of priority actions to protect our native turtles. On **5/21/2020**, she asks the Council to consider signing this letter.

18. Mesa Wind Environmental Assessment (Riverside Co, CA)

5/20/2020 – We receive a link to this EA directly from the BLM on **5/20/2020**, which is distributed to the Board on **5/22/2020**, with comments due on **6/19/2020**.

19. Horseshoe Allotment Grazing Authorization Renewal (SE Yavapai County, AZ)

5/22/2020 – On **5/22/2020**, we receive a link from the BLM on this project, which has a 15-day comment period, and is due on **6/5/2020**. With eight endorsements and one recusal, the final letter is submitted to the BLM on **6/3/2020**.

20. Big Ranch and Gold Basin Grazing Allotment EA (Kingman Field Office, AZ)

6/2/2020 – On **6/2/2020**, we receive an announcement from the BLM that this EA, with comments due on **6/30/2020**, is now available for comment, which is distributed the same date.

21. Castle Mountain Mine (San Bernardino County, CA)

6/3/2020 – This project came to us from Becky Jones on 6/3/2020, was immediately distributed, had an original comment deadline of 4/20/2020 (we never received notice for that time period), with an extended comment period to **6/24/2020**.

**Ecosystems Advisory Committee
Summary Table from 4/5/2020 to 6/6/2020**

Current date for this latest table revision is: 6/6/2020

		Dates (2020)				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	JTNP OHV Grants	3/5	4/22	5/4	4/25	Y 4/24			Y/PI 4/22	Y 4/23		Y/PI 4/22		Y 5/1	Y 4/23	Y 4/22	Y 4/23	Y 4/22	R 4/23	Y 4/24	
2	Yellow Pine Solar EIS	3/20	4/25	5/4	5/1	Y 4/29			Y/A 4/25			Y/PI 4/28	Y 4/26								
3	Spangler Hills Fence	3/17	3/31	4/20	4/15	Y 4/13			Y/PI 4/8	Y 4/11		Y/PI 4/6	Y 4/9		Y 4/9	Y 4/8		Y 4/10	Y 4/24	Y 4/10	
4	Sonoran Desert grazing	3/26	4/19	4/27	4/22	Y 4/20			Y/PI 4/19	Y/A 4/19		Y 4/20	Y 4/20		Y 4/20	Y 4/20	Y 4/20	Y 4/22	Y 4/24		
5	DTPC Grant Request	1/10	4/22	5/1	4/25	Y 4/24			Y/PI 4/22	Y 4/22		Y/PI 4/22	Y 4/22		Y 4/23	Y 4/22	Y 4/23	Y 4/22	Y 4/24	Y/PI 4/24	
6	Eagle Crest Opposition	4/23	4/24	4/24	4/24	Y 4/24			Y/PI 4/24			Y 4/27		Y 5/1		Y 4/24	Y 4/24	Y 4/24	R 4/24	Y 4/24	
7	Eldorado-Lugo	4/17	5/9	5/17	5/13	Y 5/12			Y/PI 5/13	Y 5/18		Y/PI 5/9	Y 5/12		Y 5/13	Y 5/13	R 5/12	Y 5/12	R 5/12		
8	Goldwater Withdrawal	4/20	4/25	7/20	6/6	According to one Board member, this project would not affect tortoises, so removed from the active list.															
9	Vinagre Wash	4/21	4/25	5/21	N/A	Deadline passed without comment															
10	Silicon Exploration	4/23	4/25	6/5	6/3	Y 6/2			Y/A 5/31	Y 6/2		Y/PI 6/1	Y 6/4		R 6/2	Y 6/2	Y 6/2		Y 6/4		
11	CBD COVID-19 cosign letter	5/11	5/12	5/13	5/13	Y 5/14			Y 5/12		Y 5/12	Y 5/12	Y 5/12	Y 5/14		Y 5/12				Y 5/15	
12	Raven permit for DTRNA	5/11	5/12	ASAP																	
13	AB 2736 Eagle Crest	5/13	5/13	ASAP	5/16				Y 5/13			Y 5/14		Y 5/14	Y 5/14						
14	Cosign DoF Title 14 letter	5/20	5/20	6/22	5/22	Y 5/23			Y 5/20			Y/PI 5/21	Y 5/21	Y 5/24	Y 5/22	Y 5/21	Y 5/26	Y 5/22	Y 6/4		
15	Sonoran Desert Grazing EA	5/8	5/31	6/6	6/3	Y 6/2			Y/PI 5/31	Y/A 5/31		Y 6/1	Y 6/4		Y 6/2	Y 6/2	Y 6/2	Y 5/31	Y 6/4		
16	Caltrans ROW	5/15	5/15	6/1	5/29	Y/PI 5/28			Y/PI 5/24	Y 5/29		Y/PI 5/24	Y 5/26				R 5/26				
17	Illegal Turtle Collection	5/21	5/21	ASAP	5/25	Y 5/23	Y/PI 5/21	Y/A 5/21	Y 5/22			Y/PI 5/21		Y 5/21	Y 5/26	Y 5/22	Y 5/21	Y 5/23			
18	Mesa Wind EA	5/20	5/22	6/19																	
19	Horseshoe Allotment	5/22	5/22	6/5	6/3	Y 6/2		R 6/2		Y 6/2		Y/PI 6/1	Y 6/4		Y 6/2	Y 6/2	Y 6/2	Y 6/2	Y 6/4	Y 6/2	

20	Big Ranch, Gold Basin Grazing	6/2	6/2	6/30				R 6/2											
21	Castle Mountain Mine	6/3	6/3	6/24															

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