Desert Tortoise Council
Minutes of the Board of Directors Meeting

7 January 2023
Zoom Online Meeting

CALL TO ORDER

The meeting was called to order by Chairperson, Mari Quillman at 10:00 a.m. (PST) 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, Peter Woodman, Judy Hohman, Ken MacDonald, Maggie Fusari, Mari Quillman, Bruce Palmer, Michael Tuma, Becky Jones, Joe Probst, Ed LaRue, Halle Kohn, Michael Vamstad, and Max Havelka. Absent: Cristina Jones Guests: John Kalish.

A. Welcome/Announcements/Introductions: John Kalish was invited to join the meeting at 10:30 a.m. as a prospective Board member.

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

C. Approval of Meeting Minutes of 12/3/2022: 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: There were no new Board actions since the meeting of 3 December 2023.

E. Special Discussion Items: None were identified in the agenda.

1. Mohave Ground Squirrel Council: Ed LaRue shared that the second meeting of this fledgling group, which has patterned both its mission statement and bylaws after those of the Council, will be on 1/9/2023. Though not yet formalized, Ed will likely be its first recording secretary. For now, their primary function is to identify data gaps and research priorities and to acquire funding to address those needs.

F. Next Meeting Date: The next meeting of the Board of Directors will be in person on February 23, 2023 at the Dixie Center in St. George, UT, at 08:00 a.m. to open the beginning of the Symposium at the Annual Business Meeting.
OFFICER/COMMITTEE REPORTS

G. Treasurer’s Report: In an electronic version of the Treasurer’s Report\(^1\), Joe Probst shared that as of 12/31/2022, the Council has Total Assets of $292,199.67, a Total Income for 2022 of $176,086.43, and Total Expenses of $72,078.22. Joe also provided an accounting of budgeted and actual income and expenses for 2022\(^2\). Expected expenses for 2022 were $106,250.00 compared to $72,078.22 actual expenses, and expected income was $124,200.00 compared to $176,086.43 actual income. The main increase in actual income is from the Introductory Course and several recent large donations, including sponsorships for the Symposium. Joe also provided a spreadsheet for the 2023 budget, \(^3\) which reveals expected expenses of $195,050.00 compared to expected income of $183,200.00. The significant increase in expected expenses in 2023 compared to 2022 is due to the first in-person Symposium since 2020 in St. George, UT. Joe anticipates two in-person Board meetings in 2023, which is reflected in the proposed 2023 budget. Joe Probst reported that the 2022 books are now complete, so he will be sending the financial documents to Ray Butler for 2019, 2020, 2021, and 2022, so the Audit will be done in time for the Symposium. Motion made (Ed LaRue), seconded (Bruce Palmer), and unanimously approved to accept both the Treasurer’s Report and the Proposed 2023 budget as presented.

H. Corresponding Secretary’s Report: In this and other committees, Mari Quillman has received both annual reports and specific reports. Becky Jones reported there have been three recent donations, one membership renewal, and a question about the instructors at the Introductory Course.

I. Membership Committee’s Report: In an electronic version of her annual membership report, Halle Kohn reported membership as of 1/4/2023 included 868 total contacts, 321 active members, and 676 members with overdue renewals. The Committee is engaged in an ongoing process of determining how membership data can be used to solicit assistance from members, encourage new member acquisition, and recruit a diverse membership that can broaden our collective understanding of the issues facing our species and landscapes of interest. The expansion of the Council’s membership is important for adherence to the 5-Year Strategic Plan (2020-2025).

J. Nominating Committee’s Report: Positions to be renewed at the Annual Business Meeting, showing Board members willing to stand for the respective positions in parenthesis, include Chairperson-elect (Mari Quillman), Membership Coordinator (Halle Kohn), and Recording Secretary (Ed LaRue). We will need to work with David Hedrick and Michael Vamstad to ensure that virtual attendees who vote are members and to get counts of those present and the affirmative votes. Ed LaRue will oversee the election if Becky Jones cannot be there in person. Ken MacDonald shared that, having expressed an interest in joining the Board, John Kalish provided a letter of interest and resumé several days ago, and joined the meeting at 10:30 so we could discuss his potential involvement. John was then asked to leave the Zoom room, at which time there was unanimous consent to have him join the Board. Motion was made (Ed LaRue), seconded (Kristin Berry), and unanimously approved to welcome John Kalish to the Board of Directors. Mari Quillman forwarded her recent email with committee reports to John. Becky Jones will send the updated Board contact Excel spreadsheet to John Kalish.

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\(^1\) https://www.dropbox.com/s/3jk4feabj5bxmlv/12-31-2022%20Treasurer%20Report.xlsx?dl=0


\(^3\) https://www.dropbox.com/s/7v5zqgslbkqngu/2023%20Budget%20%20%20.xlsx?dl=0
K. Ecosystems Advisory Committee’s (EAC) Report: In an electronic version of his report (see attachment), Ed LaRue reported that there were 14 projects identified and 9 were reviewed by the Board in the reporting period between 12/3/2022 and 1/7/2023. No deadlines were missed, and the other projects are pending with future deadlines. Ed expressed his appreciation for John Kalish’s input into the last few EAC letters. It was rewarding that the BLM Yuma, AZ office asked that we become more involved in assessing impacts of the proposed Jove Solar Project as the result of submitting comments. Ed also encouraged all Board members to let him know if he accidentally failed to identify anyone in the EAC tables as providing input, particularly recusals.

L. Media Committee’s Report: Halle Kohn will soon provide her Media Committee annual report to Mari Quillman. The second of two Newsletters in 2022 was distributed in December. In an email from Michael Tuma to Sky Esser on 1/5/2023, Michael shared that Network Solutions is problematic and he would like us to transition over to WP Engine. He recommends the Managed Wordpress Startup plan from WP Engine, with the Extra Layer of Security — $425 for the first year, $530/year thereafter. There may be about a $1,000 labor costs to have Sky Esser make the transition. Motion made (Ed LaRue), seconded (Michael Vamstad), and unanimously approved to transition from Network Solutions to WP Engine for the initial cost of about $425 and, if satisfied with the product, to fund the annual cost of about $530/year afterwards, with up to $1,000 payment to fund Sky Esser’s labor to facilitate the transition. ● There will still be an “email issue” that Michael Tuma and Esser will need to resolved at a future date.

M. Strategic Planning Committee Report: Bruce Palmer indicated there was nothing to report at this time.

N. Grants Committee’s Report: Max Havelka has agreed to help Michael Tuma with this committee, enabling Michael to remain in the chair position. Michael Tuma will soon provide an annual report to Mari Quillman for the Grants Committee. There was a recent $2,500 donation from Leeward Energy that could fund the Linda Allison grant, pending discussions in an impending conference call with the donor. Michael Tuma will follow up on the report from Transitions Habitat Conservancy on the most recent funding for the Southern Edison California $10,000 grant. ● Michael Tuma will redefine the deliverables of this grant to obligate the recipient to present a talk at the subsequent Symposium. The Morafka award and Glenn Stewart travel award each have received one application.

O. Agency Coordinating Committee’s Report: With Cristina’s impending resignation, we need someone to chair this committee. Judy Hohman reported a recent conversation with Glen Knowles, a Supervisor of the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service (USFWS), who attended our previous coordination meeting and expressed a desire to continue this effort. She indicated that in a December conversation with Knowles, he has indicated that he would like to increase communication and cooperation between the Council, USFWS, and Management Oversight Group (MOG). John Kalish is interested in the function of this committee, has good relationships with agency personnel, and may be a good person to chair this committee.

P. Mexican Tortoise Coordination Committee (MTCC): Michael Vamstad indicated that he will soon disseminate a Spanish translated version of the Symposium invitation, including the availability to have Mexican biologists attend the Symposium free of charge. Joe Probst will amend the 2023 budget to comp three registrations of Mexican biologists for the Symposium. Motion made (Bruce Palmer), seconded (Judy Hohman), and approved to amend the 2023 budget to comp up to three Mexican biologists to attend the 2023 Symposium, and to include a line item in future budgets to provide for free registration for three Mexican biologists.
Q. Training Program Committee Report:

1. Introductory Training Course Committee’s Report: In an electronic version of her report, Maggie Fusari shared that everything went well. Maggie Fusari will work with Pete Woodman to set a date for the 2023 Introductory Course so it can be announced at the Symposium.

2. Advanced Training Courses Committee’s Report: Mari Quillman knows of several biologists who would like to participate, and Maggie Fusari is willing to help out with registration. Bruce Palmer indicated any new course would require close cooperation with USFWS and the approval process. Pete Woodman recommends that California Department of Fish and Wildlife (CDFW) be consulted because their permitting requirements are much different for the State of California than those of the USFWS. Max Havelka has expressed an interest in helping with advanced training and Cristina Jones is still willing to help conduct another advanced training course. Bruce would like to see us alternate between conducting the advanced training course one year and the health assessment course in alternating years. Mari Quillman will contact Cristina Jones, Maggie Fusari, Judy Hohman, Pete Woodman, Bruce Palmer, and Max Havelka to discuss future courses.

R. Education and Outreach Committee’s Report: Maggie Fusari is working with a recent contact to see how we can better facilitate education and outreach, particularly with citizen science. Halle Kohn will help Maggie identify and implement newly identified methods. Mari Quillman recently shared a citizen science document with the Board. Joe Probst and Ed LaRue will attend the February 7 to 10, 2023 annual meeting of the Western Chapter of The Wildlife Society (TWS) in Riverside, CA. ● Joe Probst will contact TWS right away to pay nonprofit vendor fees, and will provide the current swag inventory to Mari Quillman.

S. Annual Symposium Program Committee’s Report: In an electronic version of her report, Kristin Berry reported that there are distinguished panel members on the cannabis grow farms issue. There are seven or eight agency biologists on the government activities panel. Cameron Rogen has accepted the invitation to be the banquet speaker. There will be a speaker on the effects of dust on the desert; demography, connectivity, and climate papers; three genetics papers; papers from Utah biologists; and seven papers on population augmentation and translocation. There is a poster to be displayed, with a title and abstract forthcoming.

The draft Program needs to be on the website by January 20, 2023, to be posted by the 23rd, which is 30 days prior to the Symposium, as required in the Bylaws. Bruce Palmer and Ed LaRue agreed to review the Program. Kristin Berry has full discretion to accept as many compensated speakers as possible. She would like to have the Program to the printers by February 1, and Pete Woodman will transport the Programs and awards plaques to St George. ● Mari Quillman will have her Chairperson’s Report abstract and sponsorships to Kristin Berry by January 10. The Annual Business Meeting will be at 8 a.m. on February 23, to open the Symposium. Mari Quillman will send an invite to pertinent Board members for a 7 pm January 10 Symposium planning session. Half hour breaks have been shortened to 20 minutes to accommodate so many speakers. Kristin Berry will let us know asap when we will finish on Saturday, February 25, to help members solidify their travel plans. ● Kristin Berry will work with Sky Esser to describe the two new awards on the website. Maggie Fusari will prepare and have 10 minutes to present a memorial for Cecil Schwalbe. ● Ed LaRue will work with John Kalish to present a memorial for Gerry Hillier during five minutes at the Symposium. ● Maggie Fusari will attempt to acquire as many photographs as possible of those who have recently passed away.
We may not have a silent auction, but will have raffles and sponsorship announcements at the beginning of breaks, and have both raffle and auction items during the banquet. We need to let the Dixie Center know by February 1 how many people we expect. There are only 59 registrants at this time, including 46 in person and 13 virtual. Mari Quillman will work with Sky to extend the registration deadline from January 15 to sometime later. ● In the interest of generating interest and participation in the Council’s committees, Judy Hohman will prepare a list of different committees so Mari Quillman can prepare a slide and show it during the Symposium. ● Max Havelka will oversee volunteers, including one for lights, who would be compensated.

Joe Probst will bring the swag and have it available for sale. There are about $10,000 in sponsorships, with a few more likely to come. SNEI, Inc. will fund the Wednesday night social at 7 pm and the Council will fund a Thursday night social. Judy Hohman suggested that we could add a dollar to each drink to be contributed toward the Council, which someone (no one identified) would need to coordinate with the caterer. Pete Woodman reported there are 10 people for the morning and 3 people for the afternoon field trips so far. Packet-stuffing will be completed on Wednesday afternoon, at about 4 pm.

Mari Quillman will work with Sky to extend the registration deadline from January 15 to sometime later. ● In the interest of generating interest and participation in the Council’s committees, Judy Hohman will prepare a list of different committees so Mari Quillman can prepare a slide and show it during the Symposium. ● Max Havelka will oversee volunteers, including one for lights, who would be compensated.

Mari Quillman will provide the compensation code to all Board members. Since participation at the Annual Business Meeting is required, Board members may be compensated for travel and lodging, and those who can pay for themselves are encouraged to do so. Mari Quillman will order individual hand sanitizers and masks to be distributed at registration. The 2024 Symposium is likely to be in Las Vegas, NV, which may be problematic this late (facilities are often booked out a few years in advance). Joe Probst will contact Tracy Bailey about standard contract documents that can be submitted to Sam’s Town, South Pointe, etc. or a non-casino facility for 2024. The tentative date for the Symposium would be February 22-24, 2024.

T. Fundraising Committee Report: Ken MacDonald recently provided a description of the Fundraiser Director. Maggie Fusari recommended that the clause, “or equivalent education,” be added to the current job description requirement to have a bachelor’s degree. Max Havelka will work with his wife to provide Ken MacDonald wording for the position for Fundraising Director to be announced as a request for proposal – RFP, including the best places to advertise the position. Regarding Amazon Smile, Joe reported that $478 were contributed in the third quarter, alone. Regarding the Go Fund Me program, Mari Quillman has recently contacted Greer Dolby to pursue this, and will report back later. We are planning to have our first Drink Beer Save Tortoises event at the Escape Brewery on Saturday May 20, 2023 in Redlands, CA, to be coordinated by Mari Quillman, Max Havelka, and others.

U. Awards Committee’s Reports: Kristin Berry reported that the committee is nearly done identifying award recipients, which are necessarily anonymous. The award plaques will be mailed to Pete Woodman, who will bring them to St. George.

NEW BUSINESS

V. Cannabis grow farms: The large panel of distinguished panelists resulted from this discussion.

W. Master Calendar: No updates, but please contact Judy Hohman with any additions/changes to be added to the calendar, to be shared prior to any new Board meetings.

X. Covid policy: The previous work on this policy has prepared us for the Symposium. Banquet tables will be set up to accommodate eight people rather than ten. The latest variant is not
responding well to previous vaccines, so the latest vaccines are recommended prior to attending. Kristin Berry shared that one in eight infected persons develop long-term Covid, which should be avoided at all costs. Our policy should clearly state that we have the right to ask someone to leave if they are displaying clear signs of sickness, like coughing and sneezing, or who test positive. **Mari Quillman will ensure that our Covid policy is inserted into the folders.** We may also want to have several dozen Covid tests on the registration table, have our Covid policy clearly posted at registration, and be part of the cycling Power Point announcements.

Y. Desert Tortoise Research Natural Area (DTRNA): DTRNA is celebrating its 50th anniversary on March 25th at the California City facility. **Ed LaRue will work with Joe Probst to bring a sampling of swag to this event to be available for sale.** Becky Jones and Pete Woodman are also planning to be at the event.

Z. State Listing of Desert Tortoise as Endangered in California: It is rumored that CDFW may be compelled to enact the listing as they are concerned how the public will respond to not upgrading it.

**Adjourn:** The meeting was adjourned by Chairperson, Mari Quillman, at 1:38 p.m. (PST).

Draft minutes were recorded and respectfully submitted for approval to all Board members on 7 January 2023 by Ed LaRue, Recording Secretary, and these final minutes encompass feedback from Board members.

Edward L. LaRue, Jr.
Desert Tortoise Council, Recording Secretary
Ecosystems Advisory Committee Report
DTC Board Meeting of 7 January 2023

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

1. Legislative Environmental Impact Statement (LEIS) Regarding Proposed Public Land Withdrawal in Vicinity of Arizona State Route 95 (Yuma Proving Ground, AZ)
   6/29/2022 – The notice for this project was received from a third party on this date, with a due date of 12/8/2022. BLM must implement a land withdrawal process to “prepare” the land for the military withdrawal. BLM will produce an EA. The Army will produce a LEIS. The draft letter was circulated on 12/7/2022 and submitted on 12/8/2022 with seven endorsements.

2. Draft Staff Report, Land-Use Screens for Electric System Planning (CA)
   10/5/2022 – The notice for this project was received from the California Energy Commission on this date, distributed on 10/14/2022, with an unknown due date.

3. Red Rock Canyon General Plan and EIR (Kern Co, CA)
   10/18/2022 – The notice for this project was received directly from State Parks on this date, distributed on 10/27/2022, with a due date of 12/16/2022. The draft letter is distributed on 12/13/2022 and submitted to State Parks on 12/16/2022 with 10 endorsements.

4. Gold Butte National Monument Implementation Plan Public Scoping (Clark Co, NV)
   11/1/2022 – The notice for this project was received from the BLM on this date, distributed on 11/16/2022, with a due date of 12/14/2022. The draft letter is distributed on 12/8/2022 and submitted to the BLM on 12/11/2022 with eight endorsements.

5. Copper Rays Solar Project (Nye Co, NV)
   11/14/2022 – The notice for this project was received directly from the BLM on this date, distributed on 11/16/2022, with a due date of 1/13/2023.

6. Oro Cruz Mineral Exploration Project (Imperial County, CA)
   11/16/2022 – The notice for this project was provided by BLM and Mari Quillman on this date, distributed on 11/16/2022, with a due date of 12/16/2022. The draft letter is distributed on 12/11/2022 and submitted to the BLM on 12/12/2022 with 10 endorsements.

7. Environmental Impact Report for the KPC Coachella Specific Plan (Riverside Co, CA)
   11/21/2022 – On this date Ron Berger of the Desert Tortoise Preserve Committee alerts us to this project. The draft letter is circulated on 12/12/2022 and submitted on 12/12/2022 with eight endorsements.

8. Ivanpah-Control Project (Bishop, CA to Primm, NV)
   11/17/2022 – On this date, BLM provides notice of the preparation of an EIS, which is distributed on 12/8/2022, with a deadline of 1/3/2023. The draft letter is distributed on 12/29/2022, and with eight endorsements, the final letter is submitted on 1/3/2023.

9. Three Kids Mine Draft Environmental Assessment (Clark Co, NV)
   11/18/2022 – On this date, BLM provides notice of the preparation of an EA, which is distributed on 12/8/2022, with a deadline of 12/19/2022. With 10 endorsements, the final letter is submitted on 12/19/2022.
10. Vidal Energy Project (San Bernardino Co, CA)
12/2/2022 – On this date, the County provides notice of the preparation of an EIR, which is distributed on 12/8/2022, with a deadline of 1/23/2023.

11. Jove Solar Energy Project (La Paz Co, AZ)
12/7/2022 – On this date, a third party provides notice of the solicitation of scoping comments on an EIS, which is distributed on 12/8/2022, with a deadline of 1/6/2023. The draft letter is circulated on 12/31/2022, and with seven endorsements, the final letter is submitted on 1/4/2023.

12. Pinyon Solar & Elisabeth Solar Projects in Central and Western Arizona (Maricopa and Yuma, AZ)
12/7/2022 – On this date, a third party provides notice of segregation, which is distributed on 12/8/2022, with no identified deadline. An email is sent to the BLM on 12/8/2022 asking if there are opportunities to comment. Having heard nothing, a second inquiry is emailed on 1/4/2023. In an email from Rem Hawes of the BLM on 1/5/2023, we were informed that we are now identified as an affected interest but there are no opportunities for comment at this time.

12/8/2022 – On this date, a third party provides notice of the solicitation of scoping comments on a programmatic EIS covering western states, which is distributed on 12/8/2022, with a deadline of 2/6/2023.

14. Request to cosign a letter to increase USFWS’ budget for endangered species in FY24 (National)
1/3/2023 – On this date, we receive a request from Stephanie Kurose of Center for Biological Diversity (CBD) and Defenders of Wildlife asking the Council to cosign a letter urging the Biden Administration to significantly increase its budget request for endangered species in FY24. With nine endorsements from Board members, Ed LaRue signs the petition on behalf of the Council and informs Kurose of this decision on 1/4/2023.
## Ecosystems Advisory Committee
### Summary Table from 12/3/2022 to 1/7/2023

Current date for this latest table revision is: 1/7/2023

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**Notes:**
- **BJ** = Becky Jones, **BP** = Bruce Palmer, **EL** = Ed LaRue, **HK** = Halle Kohn, **JH** = Judy Hohman, **JP** = Joe Probst, **KB** = Kristin Berry, **KM** = Ken MacDonald, **MH** = Max Havelka, **MF** = Maggie Fusari, **MQ** = Mari Quillman, **MT** = Michael Tuma, **MV** = Michel Vamstad, **PW** = Pete Woodman

*See notes on previous page; no action at this time*