

Final Final Final

Desert Tortoise Council Minutes of the Board of Directors Meeting

7 January 2024
Zoom Online Meeting

CALL TO ORDER

The meeting was called to order by Chairperson, Mari Quillman at 10:03 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, Judy Hohman, Ken MacDonald, Maggie Fusari, Mari Quillman, Bruce Palmer, Michael Tuma, Becky Jones, Joe Probst, Ed LaRue, Halle Kohn-Levine, Max Havelka, Mary Lane Poe, Luke Basulto. **Absent:** Peter Woodman. **Other:** David Hedrick, Operations Manager.

A. Welcome/Announcements/Introductions: None.

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

C. Approval of Meeting Minutes of 12/10/2023: Halle Kohn-Levine, with help from Ed LaRue, prepared draft minutes of the most recent virtual Board meeting, which were distributed, reviewed, and approved today as final. **Motion made (Ken MacDonald), 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: None.

E. Special Discussion Items: None.

F. Next Meeting Date: The next meeting will be the Annual Business Meeting at South Point Casino in Las Vegas, NV on 2/21/2024. The next virtual meeting of the Board of Directors will be on Zoom, beginning at 10:00 a.m. (PST), on 3/30/2024.

G. Operations Manager Report: David Hedrick reported that most of his recent work is preparing for the Symposium, including sponsor's logos, travel planning, etc. **Mari Quillman and David Hedrick will coordinate Symposium sponsor issues, to be sure they have the same lists, etc.**

OFFICER/COMMITTEE REPORTS

H. Treasurer's Report: In an electronic version of the Treasurer's Report¹, Joe Probst shared that the Council's total income as of 12/31/2023 was \$203,704.62, total expenses were \$213,986.45, and total assets are currently \$269,084.81. We may want to consider reducing travel awards,

¹ <https://www.dropbox.com/scl/fi/9lc02lqipd9j5510z7c7d/12-31-23-Treasurer-Report.xlsx?rlkey=lrrufy4zh6zxvikem8rllxpb0&dl=0>

grants, and other expenditures to reduce expenses in 2024. **Joe Probst** will create a new category in his budgetary accounting for awards and grants, specifying specific awards (e.g., Morafka, student paper) and grants (e.g., Edison, NextEra) as line items. • **Joe Probst** will distribute a revised budget for 2024 next week. • **Motion made (Kristin Berry), seconded (Halle Kohn-Levine), and unanimously approved to accept the Treasurer's Report as final.** Joe provided a spreadsheet showing the 2023 Budget vs Actual Year end final Report². Therein, he reports budgeted expenses of \$194,350.00 compared to actual expenses of \$213,986.45. Because of several lifetime memberships, we exceeded the 2023 expected budget for membership (\$12,500.00 expected versus \$13,670.90 actual). Joe indicated that we made about \$54,000 profit for the Introductory Course in 2023. Joe said there is a line item in the 2023 and 2024 budgets for expenses for the Operations Manager, David Hedrick, to travel to the Symposium, Introductory Course, and Board meetings, so his travel does not require separate approvals. **Joe Probst** will send the 2023 draft audit to Ray Butler on 1/9/2024.

I. Corresponding Secretary's Report: Becky Jones reported that, in addition to the usual inquiries about pet tortoises, we also received a \$20,000 donation from NextEra for drones for tracking tortoise research, five Symposium registrations, and two returned Introductory Course certificates from the workshop, which were forwarded to Maggie.

J. Membership Committee's Report³: Halle Kohn-Levine reported we have 941 total present and past members, 350 active members, and 726 individuals with memberships overdue. The Committee includes Mari Quillman, Judy Hohman, Halle Kohn, and Maggie Fusari. David Hedrick also assists with responsibilities pertaining to the Council's membership. The Committee held three meetings to determine, among other things, membership benefits and updates to Committee policy. The first Committee meeting of 2024 has been scheduled. Emails were sent out to the contact and membership lists during the year regarding the annual Symposium, workshop, newsletters, and changes related to membership. The Committee is engaged in an ongoing process of determining how membership data can be used to solicit assistance from members, encourage new members to join, 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 Five-Year Strategic Plan (2020-2025). Halle's complete report may be accessed in the footnote to see plans for 2024.

K. Nominating Committee's Report: Ken MacDonald did not have anything new to report.

L. Ecosystems Advisory Committee's (EAC) Report: In an electronic version of his report (see attachment), Ed LaRue reported that there were 10 projects identified and seven reviewed by the Board in the reporting period between 12/10/2023 and 1/7/2024. In his annual EAC report for 2023, Ed reported that we received 92 notices, which is a record high number since he became chair in 2011, commenting on 89 (97%). We authored 82 letters, coauthored 1 letter, cosigned 5 letters, and missed 3 opportunities to comment. Environmental actions included 32 in California, 13 in Nevada, 18 in Arizona, 8 in Utah, 1 in New Mexico, and 20 on multi-state or national issues. Judy continues to be a primary author and essential part of the EAC and Mary Lane Poe authored several letters, serving as an effective liaison between the Council and projects in Utah. It would be good to invite John Kalish to rejoin the Board and the EAC if he retires from consulting later this year and becomes available.

² <https://www.dropbox.com/scl/fi/0kggerps3o74inyh6z10v/2023-Budget-vs-Actual-control.xlsx?rlkey=z6es7pqvy0o0k7yx64x4elc81&dl=0>

³ <https://www.dropbox.com/scl/fi/58puyxgaej0feg4tkim0/DTC-2023-Annual-Membership-Committee-Report.pdf?rlkey=p0e24s35a14jrydddchd3bd26&dl=0>

M. Media Committee's Report: Dave Hedrick indicated there has been limited but steady growth in social media activities. He sent out three eblasts since our last meeting. The "open rate" is 40-50%, which compares to average "open rates" of 10%. Open rates pertain to the percentage of posts that are opened by the recipients. He indicated that Twitter continues to decline in its use and Threads may be the up and coming social media platform. **All Board members are encouraged to submit materials to David Hedrick for social media posts.** Judy asked that **David Hedrick** advise us of the best formats for submitting materials.

N. Strategic Planning Committee Report: Bruce Palmer is looking for two volunteers to help him plan for the next five-year strategic plan.

O. Bylaws and Policy Revisions: Bruce Palmer recently made significant edits to the Bylaws and various policies, particularly as they relate to activities of the Parliamentarian. There are also clarifications that only Board members are allowed to vote on various issues; activities of the Corresponding Secretary with regards to reporting; activities of the Treasurer as they relate to the audit report; elections will be conducted by the Parliamentarian rather than rotating among several officers; logistics to accommodate virtual meetings; officers and chairs will identify alternates/understudies to fill in and replace them when current officers and chairs vacate their positions and committees, respectively; members of the Audit Committee, including an Audit Chair, the Treasurer, and at least one additional Council member; and ways to report committee activities, including expenditures and anticipated activities in the future. Currently under the Media Committee policy, the newsletter is optional, and much of our outreach is through other formats, like social media and eblasts, so this policy needs to be revisited. The Mexican Tortoise Conservation Committee (MTTC) focuses on involving biologists in conservation efforts and secondarily protecting *Gopherus* species in Mexico. We may want to consider having two committees or subcommittees covering these two aspects of the MTTC. Luke confirmed today that he will chair the MTCC committee. **Luke Basulto will meet with Max Havelka, Pete Woodman, Michale Tuma, and other interested parties concerning the future of the MTCC committee.** • **Joe Probst will work with Luke Basulto and the MTCC to modify future budgets to have line items for travel, Symposium and Introductory Course registrations (to be comped), and other associated expenses.** • **Mari Quillman will modify the annual report template to accommodate Bruce's changes in the Bylaws for annual committee reporting.** Several members liked the idea of posting annual reports on our website, but no action item was identified. Under Section VIII of the Bylaws pertaining to Finances, the Chairperson and Operations Manager would both be issued credit cards. **Judy Hohman motioned to provide the revised Bylaws, as written, with a few changes that were discussed today, to the membership via a web posting so that revisions can be voted on at the Annual Business Meeting, which was seconded by Joe Probst, and unanimously approved by the 14 Board members in attendance.** • **Bruce Palmer will prepare a notice of the Annual Business Meeting and the Bylaws revisions so it may be posted in time and eblasted to ensure wide distribution.** • **At Judy's request, Bruce Palmer will clarify that the Chairperson of the Board would approve the alternates/understudies for officers.** • Bruce's policy revisions do not need to be presented at the Annual Business Meeting. **Bruce Palmer will add "employees" to the people the Chairperson supervises in the Chairperson Policy.**

P. Grants Committee's Report: **Michael Tuma will post availability of the Edison International grant opportunity on the web.** We have received three applications for the Morafka Award but did not receive any applications for the Student Travel Award.

Q. Agency Coordinating Committee's Report: Nothing to report.

R. Mexican Tortoise Conservation Committee: See discussion above under Bylaws revisions

S. Training Program Committee Report:

1. Introductory Training Course Committee's Report: Maggie Fusari wants to discuss the 2024 fees of the Introductory Course at the March Board meeting. Maggie and Mary Lane Poe agreed to cochair the Training Program Committee, with Maggie focusing on the Introductory Course and Mary Lane on the Advanced Training Courses.

2. Advanced Training Courses Committee's Report: Nothing to report by Mary Lane Poe.

T. Education and Outreach Committee's Report: Nothing to report by Maggie Fusari.

U. Annual Symposium Program Committee's Report: Mari Quillman shared a detailed list of various outstanding action items associated with the Symposium, which are summarized below. **If the government shutdown affects the submission, Kristin Berry will work with David Hedrick to submit the Program for printing by February 1.** Kristin expects the Program to be available for posting by January 20. Sponsors will appear on an insert to accommodate last-minute entities. Abstracts are complete and can be sent to the printer by January 20. The Program will start at 09:30 am on February 21 and end at 4:30 pm on February 24. **Mari Quillman will submit the Program schedule to South Point, and Joe Probst will contact South Point to extend our stay there to 4:30 pm on February 24th** (the contract currently says we finish at noon on February 24). Mari, Bruce, and David will be traveling to Las Vegas on January 10 and/or 11 to finalize pertinent logistics. David is coordinating with both the Council and South Point on audio-visual logistics. Joe has six easels and Styrofoam boards that can be used for posters, which can be supplemented by South Point if necessary. **Kristin Berry will email the four poster presenters and have them coordinate with Maggie Fusari.** Mari and David continue to work on sponsors, which will require easels to display the logos. Maggie indicated there are 14 registered vendors, some of which need electricity. She wants to place signs on the tables Tuesday afternoon so the vendors know where they are to set up. Dave continues to post Symposium announcements. The raffle and auction table(s) will be near Joe's station, and Mari will soon be purchasing raffle and auction items. Mary Lane is coordinating volunteers. Maggie and Joe are overseeing the photo contest. **Joe Probst will print ballot cards for the poster contest,** and Maggie will oversee the virtual balloting. Winners will be announced during the banquet, and Joe will be sure winners receive their monetary awards. The Awards Committee will decide who presents the various awards. **Ed LaRue will pick up the Programs and award plaques in Riverside, store them in his room (rather than in his car), and give them to another Board member early on February 20.** The preconference mixer will be hosted by SNEI on Tuesday evening, February 20 and another mixer will be hosted by the Council on the evening of February 21. **David Hedricks will ask South Point for the locations of the two mixers and the banquet so that information can be included in the Program.** Several dedicated volunteers (Verity Richardson and Rick Applegate) will be comped. Kristin will list "breaks" in the Program, which allows us to flexibility in providing or not providing refreshments. We have more SQUARE devices for selling SWAG, may have a dedicated I-Pad to supplement personal phones, and will provide volunteers to help Joe sell products. **Mari Quillman will order more masks and additional hand sanitizers to supplement the half a box we have.** Joe already has Program folders, raffle tickets, sponsor/officer ribbons, and Chums. Kristin wants Luke Basulto to introduce the banquet speaker. Kristin does not expect to pay more than \$5,000 for two guest speakers who will be there in person and there are several virtual guest speakers. **Mari Quillman will invite pertinent Board members for a Symposium prep meeting on 1/16/2024 and weekly thereafter.**

V. Fundraising Committee Report: Ken MacDonald reported that we received \$10,000 for the Edison International grant and \$20,000 from NextEra for drone studies. David Hedrick has done a great job on the Drink Beer, Save Tortoises events.

W. Awards Committee's Reports: Kristin Berry indicated that there have been a few problems, particularly with individuals nominating themselves for awards or students recommending awards for their professors. **Bruce Palmer** has agreed to work on an Awards Policy that encourages appropriate and discourages inappropriate nominations for awards. Board members expressed their support for allowing the general membership to nominate recipients, so long as we have guidance in the new policy that avoids the problems we had this year. There will be a mix of plaques and paper certificates, so a team leader would get a plaque, for example, and the associated coauthors would receive paper certificates. Ed suggested that the Kristin H. Berry Annual Award remain as a plaque rather than a paper certificate. **Michael Tuma** will develop the certificate for the Morafka Award and look for a vendor to develop other certificates.

X. Master Calendar: Judy continues to work on the events calendar, which she recently provided in an email. Recent changes were added to the October and December time periods. **Mari Quillman** will work with **Judy Hohman** to clear up language concerning web postings by the Corresponding Secretary.

NEW BUSINESS

Y. Recording of Volunteer Hours: The Mohave Ground Squirrel Conservation Council is required to keep track of their volunteer hours because of their recent grants, but this is not a requirement for our Council, which lacks State and/or Federal grants.

Z. Development of an Employee Manual: This is an ongoing exercise.

aa. Position Handbooks and Committee Handbooks: This is an ongoing exercise.

bb. The 50th, 2025 Symposium dates and location: Although we may not be able to identify the specific venue to meet in Las Vegas, we should at least be able to provide dates. The analogous time frame next year would be February 17 through 21, 2025, and be scheduled over a four-day period to allow for an expanded 50th anniversary celebration. We can announce the “week of February 17, 2025” at this Symposium to maintain flexibility as we determine the venue. **David Hedrick** will work with **Ken MacDonald** to seek out potential venues for 2025.

Adjourn: The meeting was adjourned by Chairperson, Mari Quillman, at 1:37 (PST).

These final minutes were recorded and respectfully submitted for approval to all Board members on 1/7/2024 by Ed LaRue, Recording Secretary and approved on 3/30/2024 as final.



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

Ecosystems Advisory Committee Report DTC Board Meeting of 7 January 2024

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

1. Desert Breeze EIR (San Bernardino Co, CA)

9/25/2023 – On this date, San Bernardino County informs us that the Draft EIR is available for this project, which has a deadline of **11/13/2023**. On **10/27/2023**, we get an email from the Jon Braginton of the County that the date has been moved to **12/15/2023**. The draft letter is distributed late on **12/11/2023** and submitted to the County on **12/12/2023** with nine endorsements.

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

11/9/2023 – On this date, David Hedrick receives an email from the BLM announcing this project, which has a due date of **12/11/2023**. The draft letter is distributed on **12/10/2023**, and submitted to BLM on **12/11/2023** with seven endorsements.

3. Mojave Desert Sentinel Landscape (MDSL; West Mojave Desert, CA)

11/14/2022 – On this date, Ed fills in spreadsheets provided by the MDSL military planners commenting on their top six priorities: reduce tortoise mortalities by fencing, community outreach to promote habitat restoration, help close OHV routes, rehabilitate tortoise habitat, and propagate seeds. The draft plan is received on **12/5/2023**, circulated with Ed's comments on **12/8/2023**, with a deadline for comments of **12/19/2023**. The final letter is submitted to the proponents on **12/12/2023** with eight endorsements.

4. BMT Minneola Solar Project (San Bernardino Co, CA)

11/14/2023 – On this date, Ed received an email from San Bernardino County's Land Use Services for the mitigated negative declaration available for public review. The comment period closes **12/18/2023**. On **12/7/2023**, Ed asks the County for a functional link. The draft letter is circulated to the Board on **12/16/2023** and submitted to the County on **12/17/2023** with six endorsements.

5. Northern Corridor DEIS & HCP Amendment (Washington County, UT)

On **11/15/2023**, the BLM notified the Council of the publication of the Notice of Intent to prepare a Supplemental EIS for the Northern Corridor Highway and Amended HCP. This opens the public scoping period. Comments are due **12/21/2023**. Ed, Judy, and Mary Lane participate in several calls on **12/5/2023**. Receive notice from a third party on **12/14/2023** that the deadline is extended to **12/28/2023**. The draft document is distributed to the Board for approval on **12/26/2023** and submitted to the BLM on **12/27/2023** with seven endorsements.

6. Department of Energy New Categorical Exclusions for Energy Projects & Transmission Lines (Nationwide)

On **11/17/2023**, we received from a third party, this notice to change/add actions to the list of categorical exclusions that currently require an EA or an EIS. Comments are due **1/2/2024**. The draft letter is circulated to the Board on **12/29/2023** and submitted on **1/1/2024** with nine endorsements.

7. Morongo Valley Self Storage Facility (San Bernardino County)

On **11/20/2023**, the Council received a notice of this project from San Bernardino County Land Use Services. Due date for comments is **12/20/2023** before 4:30 pm. On **12/16/2023**, Ed determines that there is no habitat on the site and a letter was not needed.

8. BLM Proposed Rule – Notification of Temporary Closure and Restriction Orders (BLM National)
On **11/22/2023**, we received from a third party this notification. Comments are due **1/22/2024**.

9. Paradise Valley Version 2 (Riverside County)

On **11/26/2023**, the Council was notified by a third party about this pending development proposal and the County's Area Plan Policy. The request was to write a letter opposed to the development. Riverside County has not launched any CEQA action at this time but it is expected in the first quarter of 2024, although Bill Havert who sent the request asked that the letter be completed **ASAP**. Ed's comments on the draft letter are distributed to the Board on **12/5/2023**, and submitted to the County on **12/14/2023** with only four endorsements.

10. Section 368 West-wide Energy Corridor Revisions RMPA/EIS (Western States)

On **12/4/2023**, we receive a link from the BLM inviting public scoping comments by **2/2/2024**.

**Ecosystems Advisory Committee
Summary Table from 12/10/2023 to 1/7/2024**

Current date for this latest table revision is: 1/6/2024

Dates are for 2023 or 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	HK	JH	JK	JP	LB	KB	KM	MF	MH	MP	MQ	MT	PW
1	Desert Breeze EIR	10/16	12/11	12/15	12/12	Y 12/12		Y/A 12/11		Y/PI 12/12		Y 12/12	Y 12/12			Y 12/12		Y 12/12	Y 12/12	Y 12/12	Y 12/12
2	Ranegras Plains Solar	11/9	12/10	12/11	12/11	Y 12/11		Y/PI 12/11		Y/PI 12/10					Y 12/11	Y/PI 12/10		Y 12/11	Y 12/11	Y 12/10	
3	MDSL	12/5	12/8	12/19	12/12	Y 12/12		Y/A 12/8		Y/PI 12/12		Y 12/10			Y 12/11	Y 12/12		Y 12/12	Y/PI 12/11		Y 12/12
4	BMT Minneola Solar	11/14	12/16	12/18	12/17	Y 12/18		Y/PI 12/16		Y/PI 12/16					Y 12/17	Y 12/17		Y 12/17	Y 12/18	Y 12/17	
5	Northern Corridor SEIS	11/15	12/26	12/28	12/27	Y 12/28		Y/A 12/26		Y/PI 12/26		Y 12/28			Y 12/27	Y 12/27		Y/PI 12/27		Y 12/27	Y 12/27
6	DOE CAT-X	11/17	12/29	1/2	1/1	Y 12/29		Y/A 12/29				Y 12/29				Y 12/29	Y 12/30	Y 12/29	Y/PI 12/31	Y 12/29	Y 12/29
7	Morongo Self Storage	11/20	N/A	12/20		After reviewing the initial study, Ed determines there's no need to comment on this 9-acre, barren site															
8	BLM Temp. Closure Order	11/22		1/22																	
9	Paradise Valley V.2	11/16	12/11	ASAP	12/14			Y/A 12/11				Y 12/12				Y 12/12		Y 12/14			
10	West-wide Corridor	12/4		2/2																	

BJ = Becky Jones, **BP** = Bruce Palmer, **EL** = Ed LaRue, **HK** = Halle Kohn, **JH** = Judy Hohman, **JK** = John Kalish (John resigns from the Board in September), **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