

Final Final Final

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

**8 January 2022
Zoom Online Meeting**

CALL TO ORDER

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

A. Welcome/Announcements/Introductions: None.

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

C. Approval of Meeting Minutes of 4 December 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 (Bruce Palmer), 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 formal actions decided since 12/4/2021.

E. Special Discussion Items:

1. Bylaws and Policy Revisions: Since changes to Bylaws are considered and voted on at the Annual Business Meeting, Bruce Palmer took the lead and recently provided electronic revisions to the Bylaws and several committee policies. See Item T.1. below.

2. Zoom License: The Council has been using Cristina Jones' Zoom license, which we should consider replacing with one for the Council. **Ken MacDonald will research a new Zoom account for the Council and report back to us.**

F. Next Meeting Date: The next virtual meeting of the Board of Directors will be the Annual Business Meeting, with an exact date and time to be given in Kristin Berry's Symposium Program. After that, the Board will meet again on Zoom at 10:00 a.m. (PDT), on March 26, 2022.

OFFICER/COMMITTEE REPORTS

G. Annual Symposium Program Committee's Report: In an electronic version of her report, Kristin Berry reported there are three nationally and internationally recognized speakers who will give plenary addresses on the subject of climate change and warming. There is a session with nine speakers on road impacts, and presentations on desert restoration, ravens, genetics, etc. **Ken MacDonald will provide Kristin Berry with an abstract on his presentation, and Kristin Berry will send the abstract format to him** (although it is already available on the website). • **Committee chairs** are required to provide Ken MacDonald summary reports for their respective committees no later than 1/12/2022. • **Kristin Berry will send Mari Quillman a contact list of all the speakers, indicating those whose attendance fees are compensated.** • **Mari Quillman will provide this list to David Hedrick and Halle Kohn for their use.**

Ed LaRue will serve as the chair/host and Michael Vamstad offered to be cochair/cohost, which was agreeable to all. Last year's budget for raffle items was \$5,000. **Mari Quillman made a motion to have up to \$5,000 available for raffle items, which was seconded (Bruce Palmer), and unanimously approved.** Joe Probst reported that the raffle income last year was more than \$5,000. So far, there are five sponsors. **Board members should contact potential sponsors.** • **Mari Quillman and Cristina Jones will work on the happy hour and Kahoots sessions, will schedule a coordination meeting, and produce slides for backgrounds, prospective Board members, sponsors, etc.** • **Kristin Berry made a motion to contribute \$10,000 to Turtle Survival Alliance (TSA) in support of the 2022 Symposium, which was seconded (Mari Quillman), and unanimously approved.** TSA is providing coordination/technical assistance of the virtual parts of the Symposium. **Ken MacDonald will work with Mari Quillman to incorporate a trip to Mexico that he recently purchased as a raffle or auction item.**

H. Awards Committee's Reports: Kristin Berry has been working with Bruce Palmer to identify awardees, and to revise the Awards Committee policy. Revisions have been circulated and were discussed this morning. Bruce suggested moving consideration of the Student Award from the Awards Committee to the Grants Committee, which resulted in addressing the Grants Committee policy and eventually suggesting the title: "Grants and Academic Funding Committee." Since the Student Award involves money and evaluating the student's work, it seems better to have that consideration in the Grants Committee, which is discussed in Section T.2. **Kristin Berry made the motion to accept the revised Awards Committee policy with today's suggestions, which was seconded (Halle Kohn), and unanimously approved.** **Pete Woodman will give Kristin Berry a list of basic course instructors so that the Pat van Helf Award can be given to those individuals.**

I. Treasurer's Report: In an electronic version of the Treasurer's Report, Joe Probst shared that as of 12/31/2021, our total income was \$127,857.90, total expenses \$64,475.53, and the Council's total assets including mutual funds (\$118,956.22), money market account (\$11,249.50), Pay Pal account (\$26,093.90), and merchandise, among others, is \$248,005.19. **Motion made (Cristina Jones), seconded (Halle Kohn), and unanimously approved to accept the Treasurer's Report as final.** • **Joe Probst will soon provide a detailed report including a proposed 2022 budget and plans for the annual audit.**

J. Agency Coordinating Committee's Report: Cristina Jones reported that there has been no recent activity by the committee due to COVID, although it would be possible to have such a meeting on Zoom. Cristina also indicated that we may want to find a new chair for this committee to avoid the perception of conflict of interest, now that she works for USFWS, though not directly with turtles and tortoises. We will continue to work on this issue, perhaps identify a new chair, and discuss a specific topic that can be discussed by the agencies. Maggie Fusari, Kristin Berry, Bruce Palmer, and Michael Vamstad currently serve on the Recovery Implementing Teams (RIT). In her electronic committee report, Cristina provided an estimated cost of \$7,500 to meet with agency personnel at the Ecological Services Office in Palm Springs, CA some time in 2022.

K. Corresponding Secretary's Report: Becky Jones reported there were several membership renewals and several notices of environmental projects, which are important to the EAC so Ed LaRue can acknowledge receipt of these notices in our letters. [Becky Jones will provide the latest contact list to all Board members so we can review and suggest needed revisions.](#)

L. Membership Committee's Report: In an electronic version of her report, Halle Kohn reported we have 804 Total Members, 323 Active Members, 621 where renewal is overdue, and 7 New Members, with 3 of those in the last week. Halle and Mari Quillman have been working with Sky Esser to address a glitch regarding renewed membership for relapsed members. [Halle Kohn and Michael Tuma continue working on a QR code for membership so that Ed LaRue will have it for The Wildlife Society meetings early next month.](#)

M. Nominating Committee's Report: In an electronic version of her report, Mari Quillman shared that the elections at the 2022 Annual Business Meeting will include the positions of Corresponding Secretary and Treasurer, which are currently held by Becky Jones and Joe Probst, respectively, who are willing to stand again. **Motion was made (Ed LaRue), seconded (Cristina Jones), and unanimously approved to nominate Bruce Palmer and Michael Vamstad as Board Members At Large, to serve for the next three years.** Ed LaRue contacted a member in Utah about her interest in serving on the Board and Michael Tuma is pursuing a few individuals.

N. Ecosystems Advisory Committee's (EAC) Report: In an electronic version of his report (see attachment), Ed LaRue reported that there were seven projects identified and six reviewed by the Board in the reporting period between 12/4/2021 and 1/8/2022. Ed has relied on several non-Board members for input (including Larry LaPré), has been sharing draft letters with volunteer, Verity Richardson, and lately has been sharing endorsed letters with Center for Biological Diversity, so they may incorporate our letters by reference in their own letters. Thanks to Judy Hohman for helping create a standard, 20-page scoping comment letter on proposed solar projects. A letter coauthored by the Council and Defenders of Wildlife is forthcoming to ask USFWS to reassess the effectiveness the recovery plans, which was last done in 2004.

O. Mexico Coordination Committee: Michael Vamstad will soon develop an announcement for Mexican biologists to attend the 2022 Symposium for free. Last year, three Mexican biologists were given complimentary registration to attend the Symposium. **Michael Vamstad motioned to provide unlimited registration fee-waivers to Mexican biologists to attend the 2022 Symposium, which was seconded (Judy Hohman), and unanimously approved.** Michael Vamstad continues to seek involvement of agency biologists in Mexico.

P. Education and Outreach Committee's Report: Maggie Fusari indicated she has not yet reviewed the video recently provided by Hans Glasmann, about tortoise conservation in Utah, which may be an example of the kind of education materials we want to provide. Ed LaRue gave a presentation on 1/7/2022 to the Redlands chapter of the California Turtle and Tortoise Club on tortoise occurrence in the Morongo Basin, where the Council's logo appeared on his first slide. Ed is also planning to attend The Wildlife Society meeting in Reno, NV from February 7 to 12, where he plans to sell Council items, present a paper on Mohave ground squirrel, and chair that session. Ed has paid \$540 as a nonprofit vendor, which includes \$40 for two banquets, and will work with Joe Probst to pick up Council products and rent a van to drive to the event. There is some chance the event will become virtual, pending discussions of their Board yesterday, which would require reimbursement and no Council product sales. [Maggie Fusari will coordinate with Sky Esser to develop a website spot to document outreach activities.](#) • [Ed LaRue will contact Paul Delaney at Copper Mountain College to see if the Desert Institute workshop is being planned this year.](#)

Q. Grants Committee's Report: Michael Tuma indicated there were three submissions for the Morafka Award, which will be determined by the review board by 1/31/2022. The request for proposal for the Southern Edison California (SCE) grant was issued a few days ago and is also due on 1/31/2022. [Michael Tuma will work with Halle Kohn to announce availability of the SCE grant.](#)

R. Fundraising Committee Report: Since Greer Dolby is resigning, Ken MacDonald volunteered today to chair the Fundraising Committee.

S. Training Program Committee Report:

1. Introductory Training Course Committee's Report: In an electronic version of her report, Maggie Fusari reported that all online course and field workshop certificates and letters have been distributed. She has also provided the general evaluations to all instructors, and specific evaluations to pertinent instructors. [Maggie Fusari will instigate a planning session in the near future to talk about the basic course and workshop in 2022 and going forward.](#) Judy Hohman reviewed the general evaluations, and indicated we received a five-star rating, with very positive comments. [All Board members are encouraged to review the course evaluations and provide comments to Maggie sooner rather than later.](#)

2. Advanced Training Courses Committee's Report: Cristina Jones reported that the work of this committee will be discussed at the upcoming training committee meeting, so no specific plans to report at this time.

T. Strategic Planning Committee Report: Bruce Palmer reported the strategic plan was discussed at the latest Board meeting, so no new discussion today.

We agreed to move policy revisions to this section. It is noteworthy that policy changes can be made by the Board as they become available, but that Bylaws revisions require a vote at the Symposium during the Annual Business Meeting to be formally revised, and proposed revisions must be posted at least 30 days in advance of the Annual Business Meeting.

1. Ecosystems Advisory Committee Policy: One issue is non-Board members speaking on behalf of the Council, which is revised in the policy. Point 5 on page 3 is the only mention of recusals, which needs to be clarified. For example, recused members can provide publicly-available information but cannot share propriety information with letter authors. [Bruce Palmer will work with the EAC committee to develop recusal wording and finalize the policy.](#)

2. Grants Committee Policy: [Although these revisions were discussed today, a bit more work is needed, which will be provided soon by Michael Tuma.](#) The discussion was that the Student Award appropriately belongs with the Grants Committee rather than the Awards Committee. After some discussion, it was agreed to rename the committee the "Grants and Academic Funding Committee." Judy Hohman expressed her concern that the use of the words "grants" versus "awards" be applied appropriately to the funding being offered as they pertain to these revised policies.

3. Bylaws: Bruce Palmer also worked on revising the Bylaws, including the following items, among others. He has suggested that there should not be less than 9 and not more than 19 Board members (the odd numbers avoid tied votes), including 7 elected officers with only 6 officers serving at a given time, with 14 Board Members At Large. There are substantial proposed

changes to the Awards Committee policy. Another proposed change is to publish the newsletter at least once per year. Discussion is that there are people who prefer hard copies of the newsletter, which can also be posted on the website. (This led to an extensive discussion on coordinating information sharing among committees, which requires several committees to discuss this issue). Substantial revisions were identified for the “Grants and Academic Funding Committee.”

The standing committees should reflect the Council’s mission statement, which may mean changing the Mexico Coordinating Committee, which has functioned as an ad hoc committee, to a formal standing committee, which requires Bylaws revisions absent from Bruce’s current draft. The Bylaws also fail to accurately describe the roles of a products manager and parliamentarian. **The motion was made (Kristin Berry), seconded (Joe Probst), and unanimously approved to accept the revised Bylaws, with a few additions based on today’s discussion and excluding Article 6, Section 4 revisions concerning the Grants Committee, which was unanimously approved.** • Michael Vamstad will work with Bruce Palmer to take appropriate steps to elevate the Mexico Coordinating Committee from an ad hoc committee to a formal standing committee. In order to reach our deadline to post Bylaws revisions within 30 days of the Annual Business Meeting, all additional changes, particularly from Michael Tuma on grants and Michael Vamstad on the Mexico committee, must be given to Bruce by January 14 to be posted in time.

U. Media Committee’s Report: Michael Tuma indicated that this committee is meeting with Halle Kohn and several others on 1/12/2022 to discuss social media. Halle indicated that the newsletter is nearly complete, and will be distributed shortly. She will replace the availability of the Morafka Award, which has already passed, with mention of the SCE grant.

NEW BUSINESS

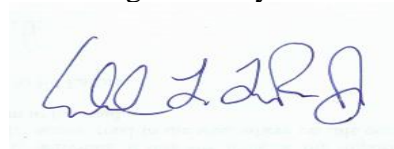
V. Scheduling Calendar of Events: Judy Hohman volunteered to assemble a calendar of Council events, which was supported by all in attendance.

W. Parliamentarian: Bruce Palmer accepted Ken MacDonald’s nomination to have Bruce serve as the Council’s Parliamentarian going forward.

(Note: Although Ken MacDonald introduced a trip to Mexico as a Symposium raffle/auction item as “new business,” that item was moved to the Symposium discussion in Section G, above.)

Adjourn: The meeting was adjourned by Chairperson, Ken MacDonald, at 13:40.

Draft minutes were recorded, later distributed, and modified with Board member review and input, then approved in a formal vote, and now 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 8 January 2022

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

1. Stagecoach Solar Project (San Bernardino Co, CA)

10/22/2021 – On this date, we receive a notice directly from California State Lands Commission, indicating proposal of a 3,000-acre solar development between Lucerne Valley and Barstow, with comments due on **12/22/2021**. The draft letter is distributed to the Board on **12/20/2021**, and submitted to California State Lands Commission on **12/21/2021** with seven endorsements.

2. Calico Basin Recreation Area Management Plan (Red Rock Canyon, NV)

11/8/2021 – On this date, a third party provides us with a link to the management plan in the Calico Basin area of Red Rock Canyon National Conservation Area, which is distributed to the Board on **11/10/2021** and due on **12/8/2021**. The draft letter is circulated on **12/5/2021**, and with eight endorsements, was submitted to the BLM on **12/7/2021**.

3. Rough Hat Solar Project (Clark Co, NV)

11/15/2021 – The information for this project is provided directly by the BLM on the indicated date. Scoping comments are due to the BLM by **12/22/2021**. The draft letter is distributed to the Board on **12/18/2021**, and was submitted to the BLM with five endorsements on **12/20/2021**.

4. Walnut Creek Substation Environmental Assessment (Mohave Co, AZ)

11/15/2021 – The link for this project is provided by a third party on the indicated date. Comments are due to the BLM by **12/14/2021**. This deadline was missed due to Ed LaRue's workload.

5. Copper Rays Solar Project (Nye Co, NV)

11/22/2021 – The information for this project is provided directly by the BLM on the indicated date. Scoping comments are due to the BLM by **1/7/2022**. The draft letter, using the template letter for scoping comments on solar projects, was distributed to the Board on **1/2/2022**, and submitted to the BLM with six endorsements and one recusal on **1/5/2022**.

6. Cosign Center for Biological Diversity (CBD) Letter to Fund USFWS FY 2023

12/17/2021 – On this date, Ed LaRue receives a request from CBD asking us to cosign a letter requesting enlarged budget for USFWS to address endangered species concerns. With four endorsements, Ed lets CBD know on **12/21/2021** that the Council is willing to cosign this letter.

7. Cosign Defenders of Wildlife Letter to USFWS to Reassess Tortoise Recovery Plans (4 states)

1/4/2022 – On this date, Ed LaRue receives a draft letter from Jeff Aardahl of Defenders with the Council as a coauthor directed to the USFWS Regional Director in Sacramento requesting an update of the latest, 2004 formal assessment of the recovery plan. On **1/5/2022**, Ed provided comments on the letter, which is currently in draft form and will be distributed to the Board once Aardahl has received approval from Defenders' national office.

**Ecosystems Advisory Committee
Summary Table from 12/4/2021 to 1/8/2022**

Current date for this latest table revision is: 1/5/2022

		Dates (2021/2022)				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	HK	JH	JP	KB	KM	MF	MQ	MT	MV	PW
1	Stagecoach Solar	10/22	12/20	12/22	12/21	Y 12/21		R 12/20	Y/PI 12/21		Y/PI 12/20	Y 12/21		Y 12/20	Y 12/20		R 12/21	Y 12/21	Y 12/21
2	Calico Basin RMP	11/8	12/5	12/5	12/7	Y 12/6		R 12/5	Y/A 12/5	Y 12/8	Y/PI 12/5	Y 12/6		Y 12/6	Y 12/5	Y/PI 12/6		Y 12/10	Y/PI 12/6
3	Rough Hat Solar	11/15	12/18	12/22	12/20	Y 12/20		R 12/8	Y/A 12/18		Y/PI 12/19	Y 12/18		R 12/19	Y 12/18			Y 12/21	
4	Walnut Creek Substation	11/15	12/4	12/14	N/A	We missed this deadline due to Ed LaRue's work schedule													
5	Copper Rays Solar	11/22	1/2	1/7	1/5	Y 1/3		R 12/8	Y/A 1/2		Y/PI 1/4	Y 1/2			Y/PI 1/3				Y 1/3
6	USFWS FY2023	12/17	12/18	1/1	12/21	Y 12/20		R 12/17	Y 12/19			Y 12/22		Y 12/29	Y/PI 12/20		Y 12/21	R 12/21	
7	DoW/DTC letter of recovery assessment	1/4	N/A	N/A					Y/PI 1/5										

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