



Final Final Final

Desert Tortoise Council, Minutes of Annual Business Meeting

21 February 2024

South Point Hotel Casino & Spa, Las Vegas, NV and Virtual

Chairperson, Mari Quillman called the Annual Business Meeting to order at 08:01 a.m. (PST) at the South Point Hotel Casino & Spa, Las Vegas, NV and virtually using the Zoom format. **Motions made, seconded, and approved are shown in bold red font.**

Attendees (include both in-person and virtual attendees): Board members Kristin Berry, Halle Kohn-Levine, Judy Hohman, Maggie Fusari, Ken MacDonald, Becky Jones, Joe Probst, Mari Quillman, Bruce Palmer, Max Havelka, Michael Tuma, Pete Woodman, Luke Basulto, Mary Lane Poe, Ed LaRue, and David Hedrick (Operations Manager). **Guests:** There were approximately 40 Symposium attendees in the room and 13 on Zoom at the beginning of the Annual Business Meeting.

A. Introductions: Mari Quillman introduced all Board members in the room and online.

B. Review Agenda: The agenda was provided by Mari Quillman and made available to attendees on our website (deserttortoise.org), with no new items added.

C. Officer and Committee Reports:

1. Chairperson's Annual Report: Mari Quillman welcomed everyone to the Annual Business Meeting. Her summary of Board member accomplishments in 2023 will be shared at the opening session this morning.

2. Treasurer's Report, Annual Budget, Audit Committee Report: Joe Probst read his report, which included the Council's total 2023 income (as of 12/31/2023) of \$203,704.62, expenses of \$213,986.45, with net assets of \$269,084.81. Individual line items were shared but not specifically listed in these minutes, so the full Treasurer's Report is available in the footnote¹. The draft audit report was completed by Joe Probst and Ray Butler, with a final report available soon. The treasurer's report shows a negative balance for 2023 due to many Symposium payments that were received in 2022. **Motion was made by Ed LaRue, seconded by Ken MacDonald, and unanimously approved by attendees to accept the Treasurer's Report.**

3. Corresponding Secretary's Report: Becky Jones reported virtually via Zoom that we received hard copy mail for membership, soliciting our membership in various organizations, captive tortoise care, notices of proposed projects that she shares with the Ecosystems Advisory Committee, several donations, and various letters concerning the Basic Introductory Course.

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

4. Membership Committee Report: In an electronic report, Halle Kohn-Levine indicated the Council’s contact list contained 3,166 names (current and past members) and we currently have 350 active members. This is an increase of 307 contacts and 29 active members from the last Annual Report. The activities of the Membership Committee during 2023 primarily included tasks related to monitoring the membership database and providing the members with relevant notifications, working with the Council’s webmaster to resolve issues with the database and to improve email communications, and reporting to the Board of Directors regarding the status of the membership. Recently, Judy Hohman developed an events calendar to facilitate annual activities. In 2024, the Membership Committee will continue communicating with current and prospective members to retain and increase the active membership of the Council. The Committee is comprised of Mari Quillman, Judy Hohman, Halle Kohn, and Maggie Fusari. Her detailed committee report is available at the footnoted link².

5. Nominations Committee Report: Committee chair, Ken MacDonald, reported there are three nominations for Council officers, as covered in Item D.1., below.

6. Ecosystems Advisory Committee (EAC) Report: Ed LaRue provided a summary report³ for 2023 indicating that, from 1/7/2023 to 1/7/2024, the Council received 92 notices, commented on 89 (97%), authored 82 letters, coauthored 1 letter, cosigned 5 letters, and missed 3 opportunities to comment. Environmental issues 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.

7. Media Committee Report: In her electronic report⁴, Halle Kohn-Levine reported the number of followers, reach, and engagement on our platforms are steadily increasing. Since June of 2023 Facebook followers have increased from 3,000 to 3,810. Content reach has increased by 352% over the same period the year before, reaching over 50,000 people. There were 9,500 content interactions, an increase of 351%. There were 505 link clicks, an increase of 410%. Finally, there were 4,300 minutes of content viewed, an increase of 17,700%. Instagram followers have increased from 1,756, to 2,059, with a 129% increase in reach from June 2023 to January of 2024, with 13.4 thousand accounts reached. Twitter grew from 351 followers to 441, with over 47,000 post impressions compared to virtually none the previous year. LinkedIn grew from 240 followers to 543 followers from June to January with over 48,000 organic impressions during that time. After eight weeks of a new account on the Threads platform, a Twitter-style off-shoot of Instagram, we already have 252 followers there. Threads has grown in popularity as use of Twitter has decreased.

8. Grants and Academic Funding Committee Report: The Morafka Award (Feb 2023) was awarded to Daniel Guerra from Texas State University (\$2,500): “Examining the thermal ecology of *Gopherus berlandieri* at a protected natural area in the Lower Rio Grande Valley.” We received a short report from Daniel in November 2023 that provided an update on his progress. The Linda J. Allison Memorial Grant (Feb 2023) was awarded to Jacqueline Dougherty from University of Nevada, Reno (\$2,500): “Using line-distance sampling data to create spatial density analyses that allow for the exploration of covariates of desert tortoise density.” The Best Student Paper Award (Feb 2023), First Place was awarded to Julia Joos (\$500): “Comparative thermal

² <https://www.dropbox.com/scl/fi/58puyxgaej0feg4tkim0/DTC-2023-Annual-Membership-Committee-Report.pdf?rlkey=p0e24s35a14jryddchd3bd26&dl=0>

³ <https://www.dropbox.com/scl/fi/hax3cq3fophsu3fd9uqq9/2023-Summary-of-EAC-Activities.docx?rlkey=c4it4lzie090brqnhx3k4o6bd&dl=0>

⁴ <https://www.dropbox.com/scl/fi/7nsuy2ava6aht7e3izcbs/DTC-2023-Annual-Media-Committee-Report.pdf?rlkey=wluwo1067ljr11o8251nmyqyd&dl=0>

ecology and activity patterns of three species of Gopherus tortoises.” Second Place was awarded to Justice Best (\$300): “Applications of near remote sensing imagery obtained with unmanned aerial vehicles on evaluating desert tortoise densities at local scales.” The Glenn R. Stewart Student Travel Fund (Feb 2023) was provided to Julia Joos (\$1,000). The third round funding of the Southern California Edison Grant (May 2023) was awarded to Transition Habitat Conservancy (THC) (\$9,000): “New Tortoise ‘Hotspot’ Identification and Characterization,” which was funded on May 24, 2023. A report from THC for first round of funding was received from THC in March 2023. A request for proposal for the fourth round of funding was issued in January 2024, and has a deadline of February 29, 2024. A Regular Grant Request was received from Dr. Jesse Lewis, Arizona State University: “Desert tortoise and small wildlife use of underpass crossing structures along the CAP canal near Phoenix and Tucson, Arizona.” It was funded (\$9,102) on August 23, 2023.

9. Training Committee Report: Maggie Fusari reported that the Basic Introductory Course and Training Program was completed in October 2023 for the indoor session and November for the outdoor sessions, with 199 attendees and 17 auditors. Swag sales were a great success. The 2024 indoor course will be October 25 and 26, with the field portion on November 1 and 2, in Ridgecrest, CA. Anyone may audit the indoor lecture series for a nominal cost. We do not anticipate any other workshops in 2024; Mary Lane Poe is planning for an advanced training session, possibly in 2025.

10. Operations Manager Report: David Hedrick joined the Council in July 2023 as Operations Manager. He oversees fundraising for the Council, development of an online merchandise store, “Drink Beer, Save Tortoises” fundraising events, donations of raffle items using Amazon wish list, participating in running the Basic Introductory Course, assisting with social media, overseeing digital assets of the Council, and essential facilitation of the Symposium. He is the very first paid employee of the Council in 49 years.

11. Strategic Planning Committee Report: Bruce Palmer’s 5-year Strategic Plan 2020-2025 is available on the website⁵. We had our first planning session in 2014, resulting in a strategic plan for 2015 to 2020, and a subsequent planning session in 2019 for a five-year plan from 2020 to 2025. In 2024, we expect to have a new planning session to cover the period of 2025 to 2030.

12. Agency Coordinating Committee Report: Currently, there is no committee chair and no formal report.

13. Outreach and Education Committee Report: There was no formal report from Maggie Fusari. Maggie welcomes ideas for effective activities (website links, videos, interpretations of important issues, background information about desert tortoises, special information for teachers, opportunities for outreach, etc.). Please contact Education & Outreach Committee at outreach@deserttortoise.org.

14. Fundraising Committee Report: There was no formal report from Ken MacDonald.

15. Awards Committee Report: There was no formal report from Kristin Berry.

⁵ <https://deserttortoise.org/wp-content/uploads/DTC-5-Year-Strategic-Plan-2020-2025-Final.pdf>

16. Annual Symposium Program Committee and Local Host Committee Reports: Mari Quillman did a remarkable job coordinating the 2024 Symposium, taking the lead in organizing the Board during multiple Zoom virtual meetings.

17. Mexican Tortoise Conservation Committee (MTCC): There was no formal report from Luke Basulto, who is the new committee chair, vacated by Michael Vamstad in 2023.

D. New Business:

1. Bylaws Revisions: Bruce Palmer shared that proposed Bylaws revisions are posted on the website. Bruce then presented proposed revisions of the Bylaws, which include: (1) Consistency in grammar, use of social media, and posting of Board meeting minutes. (2) Clarification that employees of the Council and ex-officio members of the Board do not have voting privileges. (3) Establishes that key officers and standing committees chairpersons are to identify “understudies” to fill in for those positions if the officer or committee chairperson can no longer function in that position. (4) Clarification of responsibilities of the Parliamentarian and Corresponding Secretary. (5) Clarification of the structure and responsibilities of the Audit Committee. (6) Clarification of the function of the Mexican Tortoise Conservation Committee. (7) Establishes that officers and the chairperson of each standing committee submit a written report of accomplishments to the Board Chairperson at the end of each year. (8) Allows for the Board Chairperson and Operations Manager to conduct bank transactions. We will also be announcing each Board meeting within two weeks, with all members welcome to attend. **Motion made by Ken MacDonald, seconded by Luke Basulto, and unanimously approved by those in attendance to be approved as revised.**

2. Election of Officers: The three open positions are Chairperson-Elect (Mari Quillman), Corresponding Secretary (Becky Jones), and Treasurer (Joe Probst). **Given these nominations, no new nominations from the floor, with a total of ±28 non-Board members voting in person and 14 online, 100% of the votes were in favor for Mari Quillman to serve as Chairperson-Elect, Becky Jones as Corresponding Secretary, and Joe Probst as Treasurer, as per the terms of office given in the Bylaws.**

2. 2025 Symposium: Arrangements are being made for the 2025, 50th annual Symposium in Las Vegas over a four-day period, at a date in February to be determined.

E. Adjourn: The motion to adjourn the Annual Business Meeting was made by Luke Basulto, seconded by Max Havelka, and unanimously approved. Following the motion to adjourn, Mari Quillman adjourned the Annual Business Meeting at 09:00 a.m. (PST).

Draft minutes were recorded and respectfully submitted by Ed LaRue, Recording Secretary and endorsed as final at the Council’s Board meeting on 3/30/2024.



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