

Final Final Final

Desert Tortoise Council, Minutes of Annual Business Meeting

25 February 2026

Palace Station Hotel and Casino, Las Vegas, NV and Virtual

Chairperson, Mari Quillman called the Annual Business Meeting to order at 08:02 a.m. (PST) at the Palace Station Hotel and Casino, 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, Judy Hohman, Ken MacDonald, Mari Quillman, Max Havelka, Pete Woodman, Mary Lane Poe, Ed LaRue, Andrea Currylow (who joined the Board on 1/11/2026), and David Hedrick (Operations Manager). On Zoom: Rick Applegate, Becky Jones. Absent: Bruce Palmer, Michael Tuma, Maggie Fusari. **Guests:** There were approximately 15 Symposium attendees in the room and 17 people on Zoom during 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 this morning.

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 2025 will be shared at the opening session this morning.

2. Treasurer's Report, Annual Budget, Audit Committee Report: The Treasurer's Report¹, provided by Mari Quillman, indicated Total Income for January 1 through December 31, 2025 was \$288,754, Total Operating Expenses were \$44,815, and Total Gross Profit was \$268,278. Total Assets as of December 31, 2025 were \$504,338². Mari has been working with a certified public accountant to resolve taxes back through 2023. She also provided an overview in Power Point. **Motion was made by Ed LaRue, seconded by Ken MacDonald, and unanimously approved by attendees to accept the Treasurer's Report.**

3. Financial Committee Report: In his report that covers three committees³, Ken MacDonald shared that the committee focused on reviewing the Council's budget, long-term financial needs, and investment strategy to ensure alignment with the Council's goals and fiduciary responsibilities. Committee members met with the Council's investment advisor from Edward Jones to review the investment portfolio and confirm that funds are being actively managed using a conservative, diversified approach consistent with the Council's risk tolerance and anticipated operational needs.

¹ <https://www.dropbox.com/scl/fi/sw4noowhdvsvy43hj274h4/StatementofActivity-PYCompFormatted.pdf?rlkey=1eh0vbt2jwprniojxzwp0r2&dl=0>

² <https://www.dropbox.com/scl/fi/wataiy1zk4sm5qc371mpn/StatementofFinancialPosition-PYComp.pdf?rlkey=mcxtnbt7yqkxg9pdhaf7wd97i&dl=0>

³ <https://www.dropbox.com/scl/fi/69a849tlh0psdf9einxif/Kens-DTC-Committee-Reports-2.docx?rlkey=jcqniz9hmlghj110qqv9cenn8&dl=0>

4. Fundraising Committee Report: In his report (see the third footer), Ken shared the committee had a productive year focusing on strengthening the Council's financial position through individual donations, grant funding, and community-based fundraising efforts. The Council received several donations made in honor of Joe Probst. These contributions reflect continued respect for Joe's legacy and meaningful support for the Desert Tortoise Council's mission from members and partners. To expand grant funding opportunities, the Council contracted with Just Write Grants to identify and prepare eight grant proposals intended to benefit desert tortoise conservation. This strategic investment resulted in a return of more than 2,000 percent, generating over \$300,000 in grant funding for the Council. Merchandise sales associated with Drink Beer, Save Tortoises events raised \$5,972 in 2025, reflecting continued growth in public engagement and support.

5. Corresponding Secretary's Report: Becky Jones reported virtually via Zoom that we received National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA) documents for the Ecosystems Advisory Committee (EAC), donation letters (Becky sent acknowledgement letters), and registration information. Her annual report is in the footer⁴.

6. Membership Committee Report: In her electronic report⁵, Mari shared that we had 373 members on 1/1/2025 and 414 members on 12/31/2025, with a total of 44 new members in 2025. We have received a few new students and organization memberships. Most new members join in January and October relative to the Annual Business Meeting and Introductory Course, respectively.

7. Nominations Committee Report: In his multicommittee report (see the third footer), Ken shared the committee is focused on identifying and recruiting prospective Board members with skills that support the Council's long-term needs, including finance, social media, and organizational leadership. Efforts included organizing information for individuals who expressed interest in Board or committee service, particularly following the 2025 Symposium. Positions available for election or re-election this morning include Membership Coordinator (vacant), Treasurer (vacant), Corresponding Secretary (Becky Jones is willing to serve), and Council Chairperson (Mari Quillman is willing to serve). Two Board Members At Large, Max Havelka and Mary Lane Poe, were re-elected at the 1/11/2026 Board meeting.

8. Ecosystems Advisory Committee Report: Ed LaRue provided a summary report⁶ for 2025 indicating that, from 1/11/2025 to 1/11/2026, the Council received 55 notices, commented on all 55 of them (100%), authored 41 letters, cosigned 7 letters, signed 2 petitions, declined to sign 2 petitions, declined to join 1 protest, and attended 2 workshops. Environmental actions include 30 in California, 6 in Nevada, 8 in Arizona, 2 in Utah, and 9 on multi-state or national issues. The EAC commented on 617 of 661 (93%) projects between 2013 and 2025.

9. Media Committee Report: There was no formal report for this committee.

⁴ <https://www.dropbox.com/scl/fi/ddmj8p6rles6fves2be1o/2025-Annual-Corresponding-Sec-Report.docx?rlkey=0za3r1u4op3syqumipm0egomu&dl=0>

⁵ <https://www.dropbox.com/scl/fi/dpa4rgm1cymjwju17t36w/DTC-2025-Membership-Committee-Report.docx?rlkey=s3jd6ljkjgij2jfc6axhyknhb9&dl=0>

⁶ <https://www.dropbox.com/scl/fi/dheihq3f6w4qpyk8lfx0g/2025-Summary-of-EAC-Activities.docx?rlkey=frlva4bjjve19nuev2qmt42jm&dl=0>

10. Grants and Academic Funding Committee Report: In a detailed email dated 1/11/2026⁷, Michael Tuma provided extensive grants activity information for 2025.

11. Training Committee Report: In her electronic report, Maggie Fusari shared that the Basic Introductory Course and Training Program was completed in October 2026 for the indoor session and November 2026 for the outdoor sessions, with 200 attendees at the workshop and a few more due to auditors for the indoor course. Swag sales were a great success, with \$5,972 income. The 2026 indoor course will be October 23 and 24, 2026 and either November 1 or 2, 2026 for a field day in Ridgecrest, CA. Anyone may audit the indoor lecture series for a nominal cost. We hope to have a Health Assessment Training (HAT) workshop in 2026, which is being coordinated by Mary Lane Poe.

12. 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 was the very first paid employee of the Council in 49 years.

13. Strategic Planning Committee Report: In Bruce Palmer’s absence (he is in the Antarctic), Judy Hohman shared that the 5-year Strategic Plan 2020-2025 is available on the website⁸. 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 2026, we expect to have a new planning session to cover the period of 2025 to 2030. Bruce’s electronic annual report is in the footer⁹. In 2025, we revised the Bylaws with approval of the membership with regards to expenditure of funds by the Chairperson, who may also assume the positions of any Board members who cannot fulfill their commitments. There were clarifications of various financial issues. There was an update to the EAC policy, which had not been revised since 2016.

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

15. Outreach and Education Committee Report: In Maggie’s absence, there was no formal report. Please contact Education & Outreach Committee at outreach@deserttortoise.org if you can support that committee.

16. Awards Committee Report: In her electronic report¹⁰, Kristin Berry shared that 11 individuals were honored with most of the seven awards during the evening of the 2025 Symposium banquet (see footer for the names of individuals). Five people received awards because of their service to the Desert Tortoise Council and for promoting Council activities. Kristin Berry received a one-of-a-kind Lifetime Achievement Award in 2025. One scientist received an award for outstanding contributions to research on desert tortoises, tortoise habitats and management, and three others were celebrated for their decades in implementing conservation actions and persisting in efforts to save the species despite considerable odds. The Council also recognized two individuals for 15 years of head-starting the endangered Bolson tortoise and raising them to maturity for release.

⁷ <https://www.dropbox.com/scl/fi/ov0591s6np9cdfqbjtr0j/Grants-and-Academic-Funding-Committee-Report-for-2025.docx?rlkey=hi1tzhcl0xdh3d8hw0lfgbeqq&dl=0>

⁸ <https://deserttortoise.org/wp-content/uploads/DTC-5-Year-Strategic-Plan-2020-2025-Final.pdf>

⁹ <https://www.dropbox.com/scl/fi/57zoxiy113tr238xgeety/Strategic-Planning-Committee-and-Parliamentarian-annual-report-for-2025.docx?rlkey=9jvssqvzq4ai9uuk4ltzrzj&dl=0>

¹⁰ <https://www.dropbox.com/scl/fi/uui2xclzwi4m05t57ky4c/DTC-Awards-50th-Annual-Symposium.docx?rlkey=nfv1rqnknotksfb5bpfq3sui&dl=0>

17. Annual Symposium Program Committee and Local Host Committee Reports: In her electronic report, Kristin Berry shared that the 50th Annual Meeting and Symposium was preceded by a field trip, followed by three and half days of special events and papers. To celebrate 50 years, we had the support of 24 sponsors for mixers, the banquet, coffee breaks, and much more. The Host Committee was bolstered by 11 young volunteers, beyond the usual Board members and assistants. Fifty-eight papers, including two plenary speakers, were presented, often with multiple co-authors, and three posters were offered for viewing and discussion with authors. Twenty-one exhibitors lined the halls outside the meeting room. The Symposium was further enhanced by the photography contest, raffle, and auction.

18. Mexican Tortoise Conservation Committee (MTCC): There is no committee chair, so there was no report this morning.

19. Introductory Course Report: In her electronic annual report¹¹, Maggie Fusari reported the 2025 Introductory Course lectures were given via Zoom on October 24 & 25. David Hedrick shared that the field workshops were given on either November 2 or 3 in Ridgecrest CA. A total of 190 people completed the entire course consisting of the two, half-day lectures, an online quiz, and one field workshop. We are limited to 100 people attending each field day with 80 people on the waiting list. We had 55 people signed up to audit. We will increase the fees for 2026 (see footer for rates) to cover additional expenses for the course. People should be aware that lecturers and field instructors donate their time. Also, although we do need to cover expenses and earn funds to support the Symposium and other activities, this course supports our mission by giving prospective field surveyors a grounding in tortoise biology and ecology, conservation, and field techniques. Registration for 2026 will open in July (see deserttortoise.org to sign up).

20. Advanced Training Course: In her electronic report¹², Mary Lane Poe shared that a refresher course for the HAT was conducted during the 2025 Symposium. A timeline of planning efforts for the proposed 2026 HAT is provided in her report. In fall 2025, USFWS was able to reengage and help plan the course, although the venue in Arizona fell through. Mary Lane is coordinating tortoise handling opportunities in New Mexico with Bolson tortoises. One challenge is finding enough captive tortoises to demonstrate handling techniques. She is focusing on virtual models and continues to work on planning the next HAT.

D. New Business:

1. Bylaws Revisions: On 1/13/2026, Bruce Palmer made a motion to adopt the Bylaws revisions as presented¹³, which was seconded by Rick Applegate, and approved on 1/15/2026 by nine additional Board members, so the revisions could be posted on the website. Today, Mari Quillman read all proposed revisions of the Bylaws to those attending the Annual Business Meeting, which in addition to a few grammatical changes would affect three articles pertaining to finances. Given our current financial income and assets, the Council is not required to perform a formal “audit,” but we are required to perform annual “reviews,” which is one of the Bylaws revisions. **Motion made by Ken MacDonald, seconded by Judy Hohman, and unanimously approved by those in attendance for the Bylaws to be approved as revised.**

¹¹ <https://www.dropbox.com/scl/fi/s3a3450lqqvn2s9ear5ou/2025Intro-Course-EOY-report-1.docx?rlkey=fvmgxjv4ncio7bmkn35nnpqa&dl=0>

¹² <https://www.dropbox.com/scl/fi/r4dg4xshqqqex4nru410z/DTC-Training-Committee-Annual-Report-2025-Advanced-Training.docx?rlkey=qg51n156fswm1ypyrerkr1yo&dl=0>

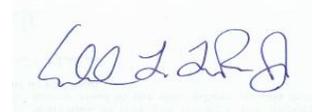
¹³ <https://www.dropbox.com/scl/fi/kid7yp7c3fsvqlnze7io/Bylaws-of-the-Desert-Tortoise-Council-as-of-February-2026.docx?rlkey=6b89yo8pz2c4uj9e87rqjzr3&dl=0>

2. Election of Officers: The open officer positions are Membership Coordinator (vacant), Treasurer (vacant), Corresponding Secretary (Becky Jones is willing to serve), and Council Chairperson (Mari Quillman is willing to serve), which will be voted on today. **Given these nominations and no new nominations from the floor, with a total of ±14 non-Board members voting in person and 16 online, 100% of the votes were in favor for Becky Jones to serve as Corresponding Secretary, Mari Quillman to serve as the Chairperson, and David Carr to serve as the Membership Coordinator, as per the terms of office given in the Bylaws.** There were no nominations for a Treasurer. The following two Board Members At Large were re-elected at the 1/11/2026 business meeting, Mary Lane Poe and Max Havelka, and Luke Basulto was not re-elected, which in a subsequent email he confirmed was his desire. Mari thanked him for his service. Andrea Currylow was elected as the Council's newest Board Member At Large at the 1/11/2026 business meeting.

3. 2027 Symposium: Arrangements are being made for the 52nd annual Symposium in 2027 at a date in February to be determined likely back in Las Vegas at Palace Station.

E. Adjourn: **The motion to adjourn the Annual Business Meeting was made by Kristin Berry, seconded by Ray Butler, and unanimously approved.** Mari Quillman then adjourned the Annual Business Meeting at 09:02 a.m. (PST).

These draft minutes were recorded and respectfully submitted by Ed LaRue, Recording Secretary.



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