

MBCA BOARD MEETING **APPROVED MINUTES**

Thursday, May 12, 2022 / 5:00 – 7:00 pm Via Zoom

Black Bold Italics = Board vote *Blue Italics = action commitment*

Regular Meeting Called to Order at 5:04 P.M.

<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Steve Bardwell	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Brian Hammer	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Gary Stiler
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Stacy Doolittle	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Janet Johnston	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Laraine Turk
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> David Fick	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Sarah Kennington	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Cathy Zarakov
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Pat Flanagan	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Arch McCulloch	

Introduction of Guests and Board Directors

Steve welcomed visitors Sendy Hernandez Orellana and Colin Barrows, lower desert activists; Helen Jeong, repeat visitor eager to “learn everything we have to share”; Allan Songer & Kerrie Aley, Pipes Canyon residents; Paul Smith, 29 Palms resident; Casey Kiernan, local videographer and resident; and Bonnie Hawthorne, videographer of MBCA’s STR video.

Agenda approval

The agenda as presented was approved by consensus.

Minutes from April 14, 2021 BOD meeting

Laraine reported a correction she had received from Cathy. ***Steve moved to approve the amended April 14, 2022 minutes. Sarah seconded and all were in favor. (11-0)***

Treasurer’s Report

Cathy noted April was a very good income month due to the Desert-Wise Living Tour. New and renewal memberships totaled \$1670. Donations included \$1000 (2 \$500 donations) to the Rieman Scholarship Fund and \$650 total from four individuals. The Tour generated \$1950 in registrations plus \$1160 membership income.

All but one of our Desert-Wise Living Series granters gave additional funds this year in response to our request because of the video costs (no response yet from Golden State). From the local water districts, we received \$1250 from Hi Desert; \$1250 from 29 Palms; \$1000 from Joshua Basin; and have a commitment from Bighorn Desert View for \$1250. Mojave Water Agency continues to provide \$5000 as in prior years. This year’s expenses have totaled \$5069 so far, with an anticipated final total expense around \$9000. The budget for the Tour was \$10,500, so remaining funds can be used for a fall presentation and the annual meeting.

The checking account holds a total of \$84,488. *Officers need to sign documents at the bank, hopefully in May, in anticipation of opening a Money Market account to replace the CD we had until February 2022.* The Treasurer’s report was accepted by consensus.

Outreach & Communications

1) New National Monument etc. – 10-minute guest presentation
Colin and Sindy showed a PowerPoint presentation about [Cactus to Cloud](#), a consortium seeking to expand federal desert land protection with a new National Monument and other protection categories. The proposed federal legislation will hopefully be introduced by Congressman Raul Ruiz this September, ideally for action before the current Congress ends in January 2023.

The land of concern spans from the eastern Coachella Valley nearly to the Colorado River. The current draft proposal seeks to protect gaps between existing protected areas for a total of 429,170 acres of new protections. There is no overlap with any of the Development Focus Areas (DFAs) of the Desert Renewable Energy Conservation Plan (DRECP). Other points:

- Add wilderness and maintain corridor linkages between DFAs that will have solar.
- Make Mission Creek in Riverside County a wild and scenic river.
- Expand Joshua Tree National Park in the area near Eagle Mountain.
- Recognize the people, history and culture of this desert area including the contribution of Cesar Chavez & Dolores Huerta for farmworkers in Coachella.
- Study recreation needs for free family-friendly outdoor activities in the “Meccacopia” areas.
- Protect the World War II era training sites; 4 camps are still there.

The Coalition started following the last desert protection bill passed in March 2019. The current Ruiz district has been revised to include more of Imperial County but the proposed plan spans both new districts. Contact Colin at colin@cactustocloud.org. This presentation isn’t publicly available yet. Steve said MBCA would want to support this effort.

2) Short Term Rentals and SBCO Housing Element– JJ, SB, SD
We played the almost-final STR video. Steve thanked Stacy, Janet and filmmaker Bonnie for doing such a great job. There are still a few edits to be completed before release. The intention is to show the Supervisors what’s happening on the ground. They are scheduled to hear the STR ordinance revisions sent from the Planning Commission on June 14 and we plan to get the video to them and widely distributed before that meeting. *Janet is working with a small group seeking to meet with each Supervisor.* Curt Hagman’s office is working on it, and Dawn Rowe’s is trying to help connect with the others. Janet thinks that Paul Cook probably gets what’s going on, also Janice Rutherford to some level, but doesn’t think Joe Baca is aware.

Steve read the draft of a position statement to be published with the video. Pat asked to share it at the Sierra Club Desert Committee meeting this Saturday. Bonnie had been having trouble connecting with our Zoom meeting, but came

on at this point and said she could edit in time for Pat to show it on Saturday if we're in agreement on the changes.

Janet reported that Center for Biological Diversity attorneys are writing to the County with concern about inconsistencies in the STR ordinance, the Countywide Plan and the Housing Element. There are a lot of issues, from imbalance of representation and Supervisor recusal issues to roads maintenance, etc.

3) Cannabis cultivation BH, AM, PF

Brian reported that MWA is creating new imagery to canvas the area for further illegal grows.

4) Cadiz, DF, SB

Their current \$1.99 stock price indicates the dreaded water project may be dead or at least dying. *David suggests we take this off the ongoing agenda.*

5) Earth Day at 29 – PF

Cathy, Pat and Laraine staffed a table with some posters about dark night skies, native plants, and a QR code for our STR letter and drew some interest. The information fair was related to the City of 29 Palms and JTNP 55-mile bike ride event.

6) Flamingo 640 – SB

Our [comment letter](#) insisting on a full EIR for this project has been sent and posted. The proposal will go before the Planning Commission at some point, not yet scheduled. There was a good overview of this issue “on the ground” in a [90 Miles from Needles](#) podcast by Chris Clarke and Alicia Pike.

7) Wonder Inn – PF

Pat attended the public meeting in Wonder Valley and spoke about MBCA's concerns. Brian created a map to show how it would badly affect the natural viewshed. Other issues are water, noise, and the start of more unwanted development. The swimming pool and the 180,000-gallon water tank are especially egregious. Almost 100 people attended, with (from Pat's viewpoint) only one supporter among them. *Pat's going to give a class on CEQA for the [organizing committee](#) so when it's time they'll be ready to respond.*

8) Sienna Solar – BH, PF

The company is trying to increase the size of an existing site by changing location but the new plan is very different and larger and shouldn't be approved as a replacement. They are trying to get around the [County's Renewable Energy Policy 4.10](#) that should keep solar out of Lucerne Valley. Brian noted that [LVEDA](#) stayed neutral because of worries about farming leaving the area.

9) Reduce speed limit on local highways – GS

Gary recently sent us information about these roadside projects by CalTrans related to the [SB43](#) traffic safety bill. It should be good for the entire Basin. Any type of business district would require 30 MPH, so Highways 62 and 247 would benefit and it also relates to the traffic issues of the proposed Flamingo 640 project. He suggests we need to work with the County on their engineering study. *Gary will keep in touch with Ray Kennedy and the Morongo Valley Chamber to plan next steps and will keep us up to date.*

Capacity Building & Organizational Issues

1) Revise non-profit status to adopt provisions of 501(h) - LT

We discussed whether to adopt the 501(h) option that Laraine has proposed as a way to be more secure in any future evaluation of our lobbying activity under our 501(c)(3) non-profit status. Our non-profit status allows only a small amount of lobbying. Expenditure on lobbying is a key element of any evaluation. If the IRS chooses to review our lobbying activity without “election” of the 501(h) condition, volunteer work must be quantified, which would be a high dollar amount for us. The downside of 501(h) is that it would require more comprehensive annual 990 tax reporting and the need to keep track of and report lobbying activities. There are very specific delineations for lobbying and the 501(h) is recommended by the non-profit organization [Bolder Advocacy](#). *Laraine will do more research and will contact some other 501(c)(3) organization staff to get more input and advice and report at the June meeting.*

2) Events Committee reports:

2022 landscape tour recap– DWL committee

Laraine showed an overview of data from the very successful Tour (attached at the end of this document). Sarah noted that the videos have been a good investment, expanding our reach. Cathy added that getting back to in-person tours greatly enhanced membership that we lost during the two years we only did virtual tours. Doing both is great, providing membership, donations and more contacts.

Stacy reported the 2022 Virtual Tour videos are in progress, two completed and two in progress.

Fall DWL event - Continued to next meeting.

3) Educational support

Scholarships – LT, JJ, SK, SB

On May 25 Steve and Sarah will attend the YVHS awards ceremony to give our three \$1000 scholarships. The students have been notified and a press release sent out (copied at the end of this document). *The one-time Rieman memorial scholarship will be further developed by the Scholarship Committee with Ruth’s involvement.*

Field trips CSA 20- JJ – Continued to next meeting.

4) Social Media and Website updates – Stacy / Laraine

There were 2000 visitors to our website in April, most likely related to the Tour. Laraine thanked Stacy for her continued effective Facebook postings and for adding photos to the MBCA News posts.

5) Purchase MBCA zoom account – LT

Steve moved that MBCA purchase its own Zoom account (\$149 per year). Sarah seconded and all were in favor. (11-0)

6) Utilize 'Google Workspace for non-profits'- GS – Continued to next meeting.
Stacy and Gary will work together on this.

Conservation Issues

1) JT listing – DF

June 10 is expected to be the public comments deadline for the June 16 Fish and Game Commission meeting to ask the Commission to reject the Fish and Wildlife Department's recommendation that the Joshua tree should not be listed as endangered. David asked Steve to send a dedicated Eblast with a lot of links and information and request for comments including the [May 7th 90 Miles from Needles podcast](#); the [Protect the Joshua Trees website](#); and Casey Kiernan's upcoming movie. Fish & Game Commission makes the final decision and they have in the past overruled the Department's recommendation.

2) Air Quality Monitoring –AM, SK, SB

Steve and Sarah's Purple Air monitor is operational.

3) Statewide Lighting Ordinance [AB2382](#) – SB

This new legislation intends to instigate a statewide lighting ordinance for all state buildings. It would require shielding, motion detectors, timers, limited incandescent lights and other measures to protect night skies and save energy.

4) 30x30 Carbon sequestration in the desert. – PF, AM, GS

Gary said the state is looking for existing parcels that we want to recommend for preservation and there are many opportunities. *Gary will create a map for people to explore and make recommendations.* The 30x30 project still needs a realistic definition of "desert," which should include areas they have not labeled desert that actually are desert, for example the Carrizo Plain. *If you have suggestions for parcels or sections to be preserved, send them to Arch, Pat or Gary.* Gary is looking into parts of the Shoshone area. Arch noted that in the 30x30 workshops they mostly focused on the lower desert, such as we saw in today's Cactus to Clouds presentation. Arch reiterated that Clouds to Cactus was asking for us to join their coalition. **Steve moved to sign onto the Cactus to Clouds coalition. Arch seconded and all were in favor. (11-0)** Arch added that we need to inform other groups how the 30x30 plan has cut us off from a realistic full desert coalition. He's working on this with the CNPS Bristlecone Chapter.

5) [Save California Solar](#)–SB

There is still no NEM 3.0 decision. We still need to call the Governor to insist that NEM support rooftop solar.

6) HR 5355 Desert Community Lands Act - BH, SB, PF
No further information.

7) Cellular Tower in Morongo Valley – GS
Gary said this is still being considered by BLM and *he'll let us know of any decisions or developments.*

8) Alts and HipCamp – SB
We'll continue to follow how the County is looking at these illegal HipCamp and ALT sites. Steve received another email from HipCamp saying they're trying to "be good," and would like to have another discussion. Steve hasn't responded. Steve got email from Pioneertown person who woke up to see a big inflatable dome that looks like another illegal ALT.

9) IPCC [report](#) – All
Steve has been reading the whole report and was reminded of fires he saw while in New Mexico. He also read Greta Thunberg's speeches. He noted it's hard to understand why people are still not reacting appropriately.

Adjourned at 7:17 pm.

Letters created / signed onto :

Letter re: Flamingo 640, Sign-on to letter to SB County re: Sienna Solar.

Next Regular Meeting: Thursday, June 9, 2022 5:00 – 7:00 PM - zoom

PRELIMINARY DATA FOR 2022 DWL TOUR – report for May 2022 Board Meeting

OVERALL SITE VISITATION*

234 Total individuals registered (Calculated from group registration payments; we don't have names or emails for everyone who attended.)

-45 no-shows by individuals registered within groups based on payment (19%)

189 Individuals visited at least one site, 81% of registered individuals

- Average individuals per group = 1.89
- About 21 group registrations (~ 16%) occurred on Tour Day.
- About 51% of registrations were members or included membership in purchase.

SITE-BY-SITE VISITATION

Number & percent of groups visiting by how many sites they visited

1 site	20	20%	65% of groups visited 3-5 sites
2 sites	15	15%	
3 sites	21	21%	
4 sites	27	27%	
5 sites	17	17%	

Number & percent comparison among sites by the 100 groups

1-MDLT	65	65%
2-JBWD	53	53%
3-Wold	58	58%
4-Cain	74	74%
5-Martinez	64	64%

Number & percent comparison among sites by the 189 individuals

1-MDLT	125	69%
2-JBWD	100	55%
3-Wold	111	61%
4-Cain	138	76%
5-Martinez	109	60%

2022 DWL TOUR PARTICIPANTS BY BILLING CITY

This represents about 83% of all paid participants, because we didn't gather city information from cash payers on the Tour Day. However, of the approximately 25 folks who paid cash on Tour Day, 9 were locals known to us so are added into the Morongo Basin total.

Low Desert	21	10%
Banning	2	
Cathedral City	1	
Desert Hot Springs	1	
La Quinta	1	
Palm Desert	4	
Palm Springs	6	
Rancho Mirage	6	
Morongo Basin	138	66%
Joshua Tree	35	
Known MB (cash)	9	
Morongo Valley	14	
NW areas*	15	
Twentynine Palms	10	
Yucca Valley	55	
NorCal (Oakland, Elk Grove)	2	<1%
Out of state (Oregon)	1	<1%
Southern California**	<u>46</u>	22%

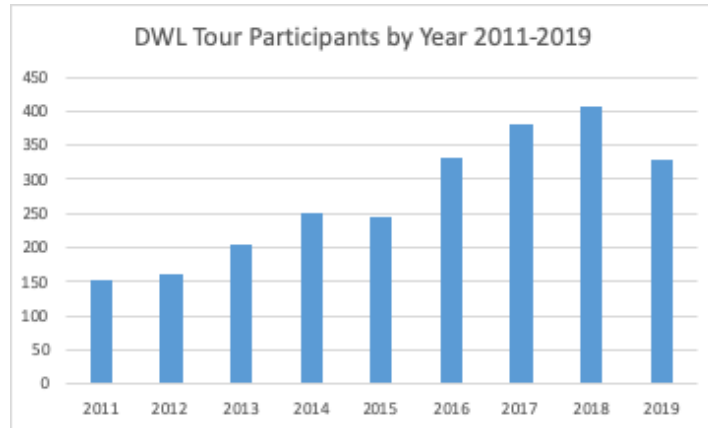
208 Registrations with known origin

*Landers, Flamingo Heights, Gamma Gulch, Pioneertown

** Capistrano Beach, Crestline, Glendora, Laguna Beach, Laguna Niguel, Lake Elsinore, Los Angeles, Manhattan Beach, Menifee, Redondo Beach, Sierra Madres, South Pasadena, Sierra Madre, Sunland, Surfside, Ventura, West Hollywood

COMPARISONS OF IN-PERSON TOUR HISTORY with VIRTUAL TOUR VIEWS

(I'm going to incorporate this into the Funders' Report so that they'll see how many more contacts we're making with the videos.)



2020 Video Views

Fredenburg	305
Zarakov	299
Bardwell	255
Mattos	477
Jagger	375
Combined	<u>663</u>
video	

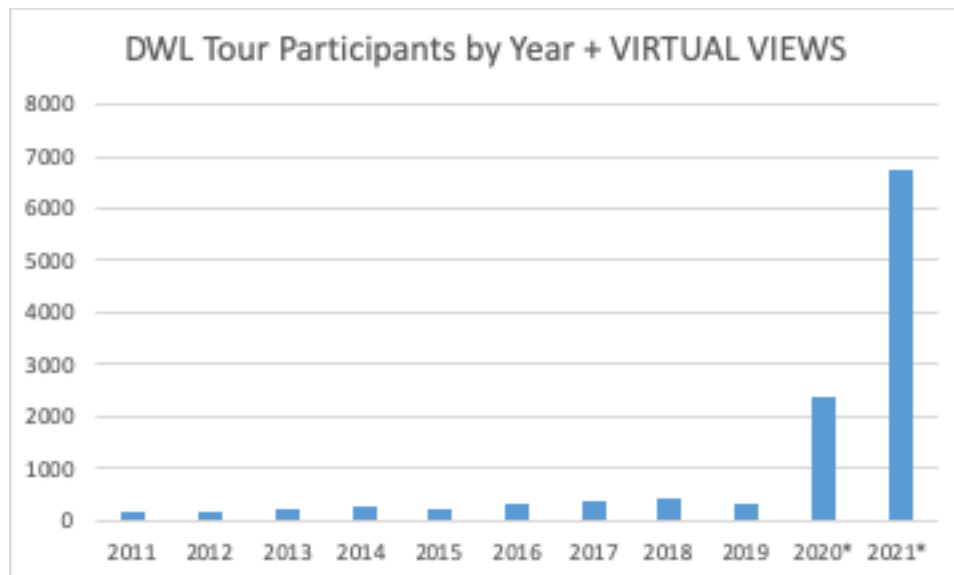
2374

2021 Video Views

Thomas	647
McKone	624
Mendoza	556
Wold	1189
Lipsitz	520
DeRouen	<u>3195</u>

6731

Total video views as of May 2022 = 9105



FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE
Friday, May 6, 2022

Contact:
Steve Bardwell
818-516-1437

Laraine Turk
760-799-2951

MORONGO BASIN CONSERVATION ASSOCIATION AWARDS THREE SCHOLARSHIPS

Morongo Basin Conservation Association has awarded college scholarships to three local graduating high school seniors.

The Morongo Basin Conservation Association scholarships go to local standout students with demonstrated commitments to include conservation or environmental interests in their education and career plans. Each \$1,000 scholarship goes toward higher education expenses in the 2022-23 academic year.

The three recipients, all graduating seniors at Yucca Valley High School, include Griffin Hilderbrand, Aidan Parmley, and Aunalisa Terreri.

This is the first year MBCA has awarded three scholarships. A science, technology, engineering and math, or “STEAM” Scholarship, provided anonymously by two generations of women who held careers in the STEAM fields, is new this year and was awarded to Aunalisa Terreri. Recent donations in memory of renowned local artist, conservationist, and longtime MBCA member [Steve Rieman](#), made it possible to offer a third scholarship.

MBCA advocates for the healthy desert environment that nurtures the region's rural character, cultural wealth and economic well-being. MBCA's scholarships, awarded each spring, aim to foster development of promising young students with aims that are in line with MBCA's mission.

Morongo Basin Conservation Association Board of Directors

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