

MBCA News  
Monday, January 5, 2015

Happy New Year! As we embark into 2015 and MBCA prepares for the year ahead, we want to remind you that it is time to renew your MBCA membership. You may do so online ([mbconservation.org](http://mbconservation.org)) via PayPal or credit card, in person at our Annual Meeting, or by mail (a printable pdf of the form is available on the website's *Join Us* tab).

Please mark your calendars:

**MBCA Annual Meeting & Presentation**

*Communities, Communication and Empowerment:*

*A Conversation on Strategies for Effective Environmental Engagement*

Saturday, January 24, 2015 \* 9:00 AM – 1:00 PM  
Joshua Tree Community Center

Our keynote speaker will be Valerie Simons, Chief of Resources Management office for the Bureau of Reclamation's Lower Colorado Region & a key point of contact for the Department of Interior's interests in the Salton Sea.

It's been an incredible year for MBCA. Our primary focus was responding to statewide, as well as countywide requests for public comment on the future of renewable energy development. MBCA's response to the DRECP, SPARC and BEAT kept Directors active most weeks of every month. We attended meetings to comment, as well as scripted well-researched position letters to decision makers. MBCA also signed with other like-minded organizations making collectively strong statements. Our engagement is certainly not over - more to come in 2015. As exhausting and sometimes exasperating as this process is, we feel that the Basin's active involvement will have positive outcomes.

On other fronts:

MBCA took the initiative to obtain the Initial Study documents from the County Planning Department for the proposed Alta Mira gated home development in Joshua Tree. These materials that were not available publically elsewhere were posted on MBCA's website and provided information that allowed our Board and Members to respond "substantively" with significant concerns. While the future of this project is yet to be determined, the County Planning Commissioners will have our articulate, well-positioned statements on file during the decision-making process. It is clear where Basin residents stand on this proposed development: it is inappropriate as presented and

should require an Environmental Impact Statement to proceed.

MBCA Directors worked with the Desert Protection Society in efforts to secure protection of Eagle Mountain and eventually return the lands to Joshua Tree National Park. We signed letters and traveled to the State Geology and Mining Board Meeting last year to express support of the DPC and JTNP. The best news of the new year is that the judge made a final ruling that the exchanged lands will return to the BLM. This long, hard battle is finally over!

MBCA also kept you aware of Project Bobcat's efforts to curtail the trapping of bobcats. In an truly amazing short time their efforts were a success: the state legislature passed a prohibition on the trapping of bobcats within 2 miles of Joshua Tree National Park and also prohibits trapping bobcats on private land without the written permission of the landowner – this law went into effect January 1, 2014. When the Governor signed the AB1213 in law, he strengthened it by requesting additional coverage throughout the state around areas already protecting the cats. It just keeps getting better though: the California Fish and Game Commission is now considering a total ban on trapping bobcats in the state. We'll keep you posted on how you can endorse this. Again, it is through the engagement of individual residents and organizations aligned with ours that this can happen! Keeping you informed is a benefit of MBCA membership and we do our best to make sure you know how to respond, when and where.

The efforts to improve MBCA communications to our members and supporters made good strides through the website and regular E-Blasts to Members and Supporters with timely news. Ongoing enhancements to the website are in progress and will be regularly apparent when you visit [mbconservation.org](http://mbconservation.org). The dedicated volunteer efforts make this possible. As with every aspect of MBCA, we couldn't do it without our volunteers and can't thank you enough!

The Desert-Wise Living Series, the hallmark of MBCA's year, is getting better and better. We have met the goal set several years back to make this a "sustainable" program and are proud to report it has taken root and is thriving! Its focus has been to provide information about sustainable resource use – particularly to encourage reductions in residential landscape water usage and cleaner sources of energy. The two components of the Series: the Landscape Tour in April and the Landscape Workshop in October were well attended and enthusiastically received. Fund raising goals have been met to underwrite costs to produce the events. This Series represents the

core of MBCA's mission and values: education, concern for the environment, and living well in the desert. Look for this Series and other educational outreach efforts in the coming months.

MBCA's Adopt-A-Highway program continued with regular volunteer cleanup and invasive plant removal of "our" 2-mile stretch of Highway 62 – the north & south side of the highway east of Joshua Tree near White Feather Rd. MBCA also mobilized volunteers in response to the Wildlands Conservancy request to assist in their efforts to eradicate the invasive mustard plant and Russian thistle (tumble weed) that surfaced along the road way adjacent to Conservancy lands. Again, this is a volunteer response and we are grateful for the donation of your time.

Members also staffed tables throughout 2014 to provide information about projects and issues that concern us at venues like the Yucca Valley Earth Day and the Desert Institute's Black Rock Lecture Series.

MBCA sponsored a Virtual Forum in 2014 for local elections. Candidates for District 42 State Assembly, Morongo Basin School District, Joshua Basin Water District, Hi-Desert Water District, Twentynine Palms City Council, and the Yucca Valley Town Council were given the opportunity to respond to three questions related to local issues relating to MBCA's mission. There was strong participation with responses posted on the MBCA website that helped residents make informed choices with their votes. We plan to continue the MBCA initiated Virtual Forum into the future.

This summer the Board of Directors met in our annual Retreat and the Advisors met with Directors in a separate gathering where we reviewed our challenges and charted ways to make a difference in meeting our organizational mission and goals. I look forward to detailing this for you during the business component of the Annual Meeting.

Finally, according to plan we are prepared to apply for 501(c) (3) IRS status in 2015. This will allow MBCA to receive funding from sources not currently available and also for you to deduct membership dues and financial donations.

This is a sampling of MBCA activities in 2014. I look forward to seeing you on January 24<sup>th</sup> at the Annual Meeting to fill you in further. We will announce the 2015 Board of Directors, Advisors and share our goals for 2015. It promises to be a great program. Your presence will make

it even better!

Sincerely,  
Sarah Kennington, President

2014 MBCA Board

Sarah Kennington, President  
Steve Bardwell, Treasurer  
Pat Flanagan, Director  
Ruth Rieman, Director  
Laraine Turk, Director

David Fick, Vice President  
Deborah Bollinger, Director  
Meg Foley, Director  
Claudia Sall, Events Director  
Marina West, Recording Secretary

[www.mbconservation.org](http://www.mbconservation.org)

*MBCA advocates for a healthy desert environment  
that nurtures our rural character, cultural wealth,  
and economic well-being.*