

MBCA News  
Friday, February 6, 2015

This year is really off on the fast track! Hold onto your hats and here we go – mark your calendars & prepare for several very important events and deadlines.

It is critical that community respond with comments to DRECP & SPARC this month – these processes seem to be finally coming into focus from decision makers. I hope to see many of you at the meetings posted here!

**Special County Supervisors meeting / County DRECP response**

**When:** Tuesday, February 10, 2015, 2pm

**Where (live):** Co. Govt. Center, 1<sup>st</sup> Fl., 385 N. Arrowhead Ave., San Bernardino

**Where (videoconferencing):** County Government Center 63665 Hwy 62, JT

Supervisors will conduct a special meeting to consider staff recommendations for the County's proposed response to the DRECP. The public will have the opportunity to comment at the Supervisors chambers in San Bernardino or via videoconferencing at the County offices in Joshua Tree. Note that the County cannot accept comments on the state/federal draft of DRECP itself, only on the County's proposed response.

For County staff's recommendations, **County of San Bernardino Position Paper on the Draft Desert Renewable Energy Conservation Plan**, click [here](#),

**Desert Institute's Black Rock Lecture Series**

Event is free, but pre-registration is required. Register at [www.joshuatree.org](http://www.joshuatree.org)

**Title:** "San Bernardino County Renewable Energy Development Codes Updates"

**When:** February 20, 2015, 7pm – 8:30pm

**Where:** Bell Center, Copper Mountain College

Supervisor James Ramos will be one of the speakers at this event, and there will be an opportunity to ask questions after he and the two other speakers (David Lamfrom of the National Parks Conservation Association and Frazier Haney of Mojave Desert Land Trust) complete their presentations.

**DRECP comment period deadline fast approaching!**

Public comments will be accepted on the DRECP through **February 23, 2015**.

If you haven't already – or even if you have, two times a charm – do so now! Comments can be made to: [docket@energy.ca.gov](mailto:docket@energy.ca.gov) or <http://www.drecp.org/about/contact.html#comments>

**Alliance for Desert Preservation / DRECP comment letter**

MBCA has signed the Alliance for Desert Preservation (A4DP) DRECP comment letter on January 16, 2015. The letter highlights the contradiction over the purposes of the DRECP conservation concerns along with its apparent intent to “*drive a wholesale Land Use Plan Amendment for the entire CDCA (CA. Desert Conservation Act) area.*” A4DP has requested the CEC to restart the public comment period once this confusion is clarified and clearly stated in the Federal Register. Additional justification cited for extending the comment period being that the public would not be adequately informed until a reasonable time after the WEMO ([BLM Western Mojave Plan](#)) plan has been made public.

For ADP4's DRECP letter, click [here](#).

A4DP suggests you attach their letter in support to your own cover letter when you submit your comments to: [docket@energy.ca.gov](mailto:docket@energy.ca.gov).

**SPARC Forum update**

**When: Thursday, March 5, 2015, 2pm – 4pm**

**Where (live):** Co. Govt. Center, 1<sup>st</sup> Fl., 385 N. Arrowhead Ave., San Bernardino

**Where (videoconferencing):** County Government Center, 63665 Hwy 62, JT

SPARC is the County government project to balance desert conservation with renewable energy development within the unincorporated areas of the County that are not owned by the state or federal government.

Land Use staff will conduct a public listening session on their plans for the County General Plan renewable energy element. The session will begin with an overview of the County's planning progress and priorities from County Planning Director Terri Rahhal. The public is invited to make comments and may do so via videoconferencing at the Joshua Tree County office facility. The meeting will also be webcast and viewed [online](#).

Additional SPARC public workshops will follow in the spring. Please check in with [SPARCforum.org](http://SPARCforum.org) for updates on listening session materials.

***Save Landers - Landers for Responsible Solar blog & change.org petition***

Landers residents have mobilized as Save Landers to challenge the Bowman Solar project proposed by developer sPower, as well as anticipated future threats from other industrial scale renewable energy projects. Over a dozen residents, including MBCA Directors Marina West and Pat Flanagan articulately presented their objections to County Supervisors during the public comment period at the Supervisors meeting on January 6, 2014 ([watch the video](#))

An appeal has been filed to overturn the Planning Commission approval for the Bowman Solar project. The challenge includes issues around appropriate siting, inadequate notification, deterioration of the economy, misrepresentation of community support by sPower, and lack of compliance with the County's general plan's renewable energy element.

The *Landers for Responsible Solar* [blog](#) documents residents' efforts in protection of their landscape and rural lifestyle. You may subscribe to the blog to keep updated. You may also sign the [change.org petition](#) directing San Bernardino County Board of Supervisors to support their appeal of sPower's proposed industrial solar installation. With the goal to reach 1,000 signatures, a couple days ago they were closing in at around 500 signatures. Signing the petition shows support for the Landers community and communicates our common interests to Supervisors in protection of the high desert's rural residential communities.

***WEMO (Western Mojave) Meeting and Workshop***

**When:** Saturday, March 21<sup>st</sup> from noon - 3:00pm

**Where:** Community United Methodist Church, 6213 East Parkway, JT

This meeting and workshop will provide a full briefing about the *WEMO* plan and the opportunity to make comments to restrict access by ORVs to our rural communities and protected desert lands.

- Full Briefing by the Center for Biological Diversity
- Comment on the *WEMO* Draft Environmental Impact Statement (DEIS)

- Protect the Desert from Off-Road Vehicles (ORV) trespass and damage

As the result of a successful lawsuit by environmentalists, the Bureau of Land Management (BLM) has been forced to reconsider over 5,000 miles of ORV routes in the Western Mojave Desert that allow for trespass and damage to private property, natural and cultural resources. At the same time, ORV special interests are trying to increase the number of routes.

**For more information contact:** Vic Fuller (760) 217-2824 / [vjtree@gmail.com](mailto:vjtree@gmail.com) or Phil Klasky (415) 531-6890 / [pklasky@gmail.com](mailto:pklasky@gmail.com)

Per WEMO website: *The planning area covers 9.3 million acres in the western portion of the Mojave Desert in southern California covering parts of San Bernardino, Los Angeles, Kern, and Inyo Counties. This interagency habitat conservation plan is being prepared by the BLM in collaboration with the region's cities, counties, state and federal agencies. The plan would apply to the 3.2 million acres of public lands and 2.9 million acres of private lands within the planning area, and would be consistent with both the resource management plans adopted by each of the region's five military bases and with the desert tortoise recovery plan. Click here for an [Introduction](#) to the plan.*

**Project Bobcat / AB1213 / California Fish & Game Commission meeting**

**When:** April 8 & 9, 2015

**Where:** Santa Rosa, CA. (more detail in later E-Blasts)

MBCA congratulates our locally initiated Project Bobcat for their great success in achieving legislated trapping prohibitions of bobcats and we support their ongoing efforts to enforce and expand the scope of protection. MBCA recently sent a comment letter on behalf of our membership to the California Fish & Game Commission in support of a statewide ban on trapping bobcats. Habitat connectivity providing adequate range to maintain the bobcat populations was addressed, as was the place of these predators in a healthy ecosystem.

Supervisor Ramos also sent a comment letter sent to Commissioners stating:

*I encouraged Governor Brown to sign AB1213, stating that The Bobcat Protection Act has been an important step in bringing California's wildlife law into conformance with the values of this state and modern wildlife management principles. In light of current policy options,*

*enacting a statewide ban will move these principles even further forward.*

Brendan Cummings of Project Bobcat and the Center for Biological Diversity reported: *Great work getting in all the letters. Our action alert generated 9000 comments from Californians asking for a ban, but individual letters are a lot more influential.*

A group of Morongo Basin residents, including two MBCA Directors, will travel to Sacramento for the Ca. Fish and Game Commission meeting, Feb. 12<sup>th</sup>. The current legislation's protection for the bobcats in boundaries around JT National Park and California state parks is proving difficult for Fish and Wildlife agents to enforce. The Department is in the process of drafting regulations to propose to the Commissioners. The draft wasn't completed, as expected for this meeting. While there will not a proposal for the Commission to vote on, bobcats will still be on the Feb. agenda. We have been advised that it is still important for the public to show up to express support for the statewide ban option. The Commission is now slated to vote on the proposed regulations at their next meeting, April 8-9 in Santa Rosa. It will be even more important for a big crowd to be present for that meeting. Make your plans to join the caravan to Santa Rosa!

**REPORT: Altamira Gated Housing project**

The Basin MAC Ad Hoc Committee on the Alta Mira Project held a meeting January 30, 2015. The Project developer updated the Committee on the planned 248-unit gated community in Joshua Tree which included their discussions with the school district, water district, Center for Biological Diversity, and efforts to manage traffic patterns. The public comment was lively and spoke of ongoing concerns for the scope of the project, impacts on the natural environment and surrounding community residences and school. The developer's lack of mention of the Joshua Tree Community Plan or the National Park was noted. Objections remain strong that this development simply doesn't fit adjoining rural neighborhoods or the overall community of residential housing in Joshua Tree.

You can read the [local news report](#) on the meeting here.

The MAC Committee is considering a tabled resolution calling for an EIR (Environmental Impact Report) on the project. Options include bringing the resolution to vote, tabling the resolution indefinitely, and revising the resolution based on new information.

See MBCA's [Alta Mira webpage](#) for a complete overview of the issues.

**REPORT: Scenic Highway designation sought for Highway 247**

The County Board of Supervisors took an action January 27 that may serve to expedite the designation of Hwy 247 as a California Scenic Highway. Supervisors approved three minor amendments to County standards for scenic routes that make them more consistent with Caltrans Scenic Highway Guidelines: 1) requirement for view analysis for proposed projects, 2) limits on free-standing signs to 100 square feet, 3) wireless communication facilities are permitted, but must incorporate “visual stealing” to minimize impacts

While the Land Use Services staff presentation to the Supervisors did not specifically mention Hwy 247 in the detailing of amendments to the County standards, three members of Homestead Valley Community Council Scenic 247 Committee made compelling appeals for 247’s Scenic Highway status during public comment.

A grass roots promotion of Scenic 247 is planned, to join in with the County’s existing mountain and desert tourism campaign.

Thanks for your continuing interest and support! Special appreciation for the presenters at our 2015 Annual Meeting & Program – Val Simons, our keynote was terrific as were the panelists representing local organizations: Project Bobcat, Community OHV Watch, California Desert Coalition, Transition Joshua Tree & Save Landers. Fantastic show of our strong community grass-roots strength!

Sincerely,  
Sarah Kennington, President

Your 2015 MBCA Board  
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[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.*

