

MBCA News  
Tuesday, January 20, 2015

**REMINDER: PLAN TO ATTEND & RENEW YOUR MBCA MEMBERSHIP:**

**Saturday, January 24, 2015  
9:00 AM – 1:00 PM**

**MBCA Annual Meeting & Presentation**

Saturday, January 24, 2015 \* 9:00 AM – 1:00 PM  
Joshua Tree Community Center  
6171 Sunburst Ave, Joshua Tree, CA.

Keynote speaker will be Valerie Simons, Lt. Col USMC retired and career Environmental Professional. Currently serving as Chief of Resources Management office for the Bureau of Reclamation's Lower Colorado Region and a key point of contact for the Department of Interior's interests in the Salton Sea. She will share her expertise and experience on the topic of:

***Communities, Communication and Empowerment: A Conversation on Strategies for Effective Environmental Engagement.***

MBCA welcomes the opportunity to bring this very timely presentation to the public here in the Morongo Basin from someone with such vast experience in so many places of work and study in the world.

A panel will engage with Ms. Simon after her presentation to help bring home the lessons learned to the Morongo Basin. The local panel of community activists will include: Victoria Fuller, *Community ORV Watch/Alliance for Responsible Recreation*, Brendan Cummings, *Project Bobcat*, Richard Lutringer, *Save Landers*, Joe Fairbanks, *Transition Joshua Tree*, and Claudia Sall, *CDC*. Each panel member will highlight their organization's current activities and concerns.

ORV Watch: [www.orvwatch.com](http://www.orvwatch.com) Project Bobcat:  
[www.projectbobcat.org](http://www.projectbobcat.org)

Save Landers: <https://landersforresponsiblesolar.wordpress.com/>

Transition Joshua Tree: [www.transitionjoshuatree.org](http://www.transitionjoshuatree.org)

California Desert Coalition (CDC): <http://www.cadesertco.org/>

President Sarah Kennington will begin the meeting by noting MBCA's

activities and highlights from 2014 and share the goals for 2015. Free refreshments will be served.

### Membership Renewal

The Annual Meeting is an opportunity to renew your MBCA membership or to sign up with us for the first time. You may also do so online ([mbconservation.org](http://mbconservation.org)) via PayPal or credit card or by mail (a printable pdf of the form is available on the website's *Join Us* tab). Membership numbers do enhance MBCA's ability to make a difference – every membership is greatly appreciated and contributes to the power of the positions MBCA takes to decision makers in the County and beyond!

MBCA Clean n Green Team's Call to Action: Time to Pull Mustard!  
*Calling all Mustard Busters!* Sahara mustard is cropping up throughout the Morongo Basin. Please join us in stopping the invasion. Find a mustard pull schedule here:

[http://www.mbconservation.org/clean\\_n\\_green\\_team](http://www.mbconservation.org/clean_n_green_team)

### **REPORTS FROM THE FIELD & LIKE-MINDED ORGANIZATIONS:**

MBCA's Board of Directors have made it a goal to align with like-minded organizations to provide support and accomplish common missions. Towards that end, I want to relay information regarding activities of groups that MBCA has connected with in various ways. Several have active petitions that you may want to consider endorsing.

### COW/ Alliance for Responsible Recreation

COW held a public meeting on Dec. 29<sup>th</sup> in Wonder Valley to address the surge in illegal ORV activity over the holiday season. About 50 Basin residents attended, including individuals from a local ORV group, and representatives from the BLM, the sheriff's department, JTNP, MCAGCC, code enforcement, MAC, and the Co. Supervisor's field rep. Citizens from throughout the Basin reported personal experiences and frustration in the lack of adequate response and protection. Law enforcement personnel response followed.

A BLM report was cited documenting widespread ORV trespass in the Morongo Basin into wilderness areas, nature reserves, and public lands off-limits to ORVs last Thanksgiving, and the inability of law enforcement to provide adequate protection for rural communities and wild lands from destructive and illegal ORV use.

Given the lack of manpower to properly regulate, COW proposed that BLM close-off roads into areas designated by BLM as important habitat for Desert Tortoise and other threatened species.

COW also pointed out the need for better signage and education with the use of digital signs along highways, information kiosks, and public service announcements.

Challenges to enforcement from all agencies were explained largely as the lack of resources. Better coordination among sheriff, County code enforcement and BLM to develop law enforcement strategies was suggested. It was pointed out that several counties in California have formal agreements with BLM to share jurisdictions and authority with county sheriffs departments. Mike Lipsitz agreed to present this possibility to County Supervisor James Ramos.

It is encouraging to know that in the week following COW's meeting sheriff's deputies and county code enforcement officers conducted a coordinated 20-hour operation on Jan. 2<sup>nd</sup> & 3<sup>rd</sup>. Areas were patrolled where complaints about off-roading activity are common. During the operation about 150 OHV riders were contacted and 24 warnings were issued for violations, many to people from outside San Bernardino County. Officers reminded riders to enjoy off-roading in legal areas in the Means Dry Lakebed in Johnson Valley. The public is encouraged to report OHV violations to sheriff's dispatch at (760) 956-5001.

COW's recent forum allowing residents to address their concerns to public officials present is critical for good communication and understanding of the issue and challenges for ensuring compliance. The sheriff's department, code enforcement and BLM are also to be commended for attending and then showing renewed effort to confront violations. MBCA will continue to support COW's efforts to demand respect and compliance of OHV laws for the protection of fragile environments, as well as residential property and quality of life.

#### Landers Residents Protest Solar Project/s

The Landers Association continues to address opposition to inappropriate siting of solar projects in their community. Speaking to County Supervisors on Jan. 6th through video teleconferencing at the County offices in Joshua Tree, residents' complains included insufficient notice from the developers, sPower for their Bowman Solar Project and the contention that project construction began prior to the County issuing conditional use permits. Residents have also met with sPower representatives. For updates, see Save Landers' blog: [Landers for Responsible Solar](#).

#### California Energy Efficiency Strategic Plan (CEESP) Alternative for DRECP

The MBCA Board of Directors voted to approve that MBCA sign onto a DRECP comment letter calling for a distributed generation (roof-top

solar) alternative based on the existing California Energy Efficiency Strategic Plan. The team responsible for writing the letter included Kevin Emmerich and Laura Cunningham of Basin and Range Watch, and energy engineer, Bill Power. This is a strong, well-researched position MBCA fully supports.

The concluding paragraph of the letter reads: *In the past 5 years, large-scale renewable energy projects have changed the landscape of the California Desert region. We now have a good idea of some of the serious problems that arise when streamlining of very large projects takes place. The use of "adaptive management" mitigation has been based on finding solutions to problems that arise after approval, and should be considered a last resort, not a standard operating practice because of rushed and inadequate permitting processes. Among some of the problems we have witnessed are undercounts of desert tortoise populations, a blade throw from a large wind turbine in a public place, unmitigated large amounts of fugitive dust from construction, bird kills from large scale wind and solar projects, lower energy output than that promised in application documents, much higher energy costs than anticipated, and requests for increased water and natural gas use. If there were no other options, perhaps this level of damage might make some kind of sense, but with alternatives like the CEESP, there is no reason for ongoing and expanding harm to our natural heritage simply to produce renewable power that can more efficiently and reliably be produced at or very near load centers.*

#### MoveOn.Org petition

David Garmon, President of Anza-Borrego's Tubb Conservancy is spearheading a [MoveOn.org petition](#) advocating a rooftop solar alternative in DRECP. It currently has 1,284 signatures and the goal is to reach 2,000. MBCA supports this along with the Desert Protection Council and Basin and Range Watch. Let's help achieve the goal!

The petition reads: *We don't have to sacrifice California's deserts for renewable energy! The California Energy Commission (CEC) rejected rooftop solar without ever doing a detailed analysis of it as an alternative. Demand the CEC perform a detailed analysis of rooftop solar as an alternative in its Desert Renewable Energy Conservation Plan.*

#### Alliance for Desert Preservation petition

The [Alliance for Desert Preservation](#) (A4DP) has generated petitions to stop the Coolwater-Lugo Transmission Project and also in support of the Juniper Flats in Apple Valley receiving NCLS (National Conservation

Lands Status.) MBCA supports A4DP's efforts and encourages members to consider giving them yours.

*Southern California Edison continues to push this \$1 billion project that would bring massive, industrial-scale energy developments to the High Mojave Desert. It would impose 63 miles of new high-voltage transmission lines on the High Desert and a 160-acre power substation on pristine land near [Juniper Flats](#) in Apple Valley.*

#### The WindAction Group

MBCA is also aligned with the work of The WindAction Group. [WindAction](#) is dedicated to providing information on industrial wind energy, enabling communities and government officials to make informed decisions. Their website is updated daily with the latest news articles and fact-based documents pertaining to wind energy development. You may also [subscribe](#) to their weekly newsletter.

#### Scenic Highway 247

From Mike Lipsitz, field representative for Supervisor James Ramos: *At the request of Chair James Ramos, Land Use Services will present to the Board of Supervisors meeting of Tuesday, Jan. 27, Scenic Highway Designation enhancements for State Route 247. This will be an excellent time to weigh in from the County offices at the Joshua Tree teleconferencing center. Meeting starts at 10 a.m. Such a designation will give weight to efforts to stop large-scale transmission lines planned to bring solar generated power out of Lucerne Valley.*

#### **In closing....**

The Basin communities' activism and commitment to the environment are remarkable. There is power in connecting individuals locally and for MBCA to align with organizations pursuing similar goals and missions. The four groups participating in MBCA's Annual Meeting's panel are great examples.

Thanks for your on-going support and participation! I hope to see you Saturday, January 24<sup>th</sup> for the Annual Meeting & Program.

Sincerely,  
Sarah Kennington, President

2014 MBCA Board  
Sarah Kennington, President  
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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.*