

MBCA News
Wednesday, March 5, 2014

We've been busy since the last News Blast in January with lots of effort directed to getting the recently launched website (www.mbconservation.org) ready to serve our communication and organizational needs. We're pleased to report that it continues to improve with greater functionality and content. I look forward to sharing the Board's activities with you with these accomplishments under our belt and of course, hearing back from you!

Save these dates!

* The Morongo Unified School District will host a public presentation concerning placement of solar at local schools: **March 18th**, Tuesday, 5PM at the Joshua Tree Elementary School, 4950 Sunburst. *This is the first big opportunity the public has had to listen and comment on solar installations in MUSD. Please attend to show community support for solar in the Schools!*

* The Joshua Basin Water District's "[Water Education Day](#)," **March 30th**, Sunday, 1PM-4PM at the JBWD Office & Demonstration Garden, 61750 Chollita Road, Joshua Tree. *Minerva Hoyt Native Plant Sale, rainwater harvesting, free seeds & propagation info, seed & plant SWAP, & more!*

* The Hi-Desert Nature Museum's "[Earth Day Conservation Fair](#)," **April 19th**, Saturday, 9AM-2PM at the HDN Museum, Town of Yucca Valley's Community Center Complex. *MBCA will host a table. Tickets to MBCA's Landscape Tour will be available for purchase!*

* MBCA's "Desert-Wise Landscape Tour" self-guided tour of 20 homes in the Morongo Basin featuring water-wise gardens. **April 26**, Saturday, 9AM-4PM. *Please stay tuned for more information regarding where and when you can purchase tickets!*

MBCA News and Activites:

1. County Solar Energy Ordinance & BEAT

Several members of the MBCA Board serve on the [BEAT \(Basin Energy Assesement Team\)](#) formed at the request of Third District County Supervisor James Ramos to provide input on the creation of the new Solar Energy Ordinance. Now that the Ordinance is in place, BEAT has been asked to remain actively involved through the General Plan Amendment / DRECP process. BEAT subcommittees have been formed to comment on the latest applications for solar projects in Joshua Tree

and Twentynine Palms.

BEAT is researching the amount of value lost by the County from the tax revenues due to the fact that the solar projects aren't assessed in the same way as other improvements, including residential and other types of developments. The intent is to show the San Bernardino County leadership that these projects will not produce the jobs and income that might be driving their decisions to approve such projects. If the assessed value is low, all other assessments attached to the lands are also depressed. There is a strong indication that adjoining properties will also be devalued.

The County MAC (Municipal Advisory Council) subcommittee on Land Use Services received a request from Supervisor Ramos' staff for recommendations on improvements in process, transparency and access to the application review process of solar developments. MBCA supported a letter with the MAC outlining specific proposals.

2. Code Enforcement

The Desert Protective Council (DPC) organized a tour in February to bring awareness to the staff of the BLM and San Bernardino County Sheriff's Department regarding illegal dumping, shooting and OHV activity primarily in the eastern Morongo Basin (Wonder Valley, Amboy Road, Iron Age Road, Copper Mountain Mesa, Sunfair Dry Lake.) Participants were shown "hot spots" of particular concern, discussed enforcement and the need for additional signage.

3. Annual Membership Meeting

The New Year got off to a great start for MBCA with our Annual Membership Meeting on January 25th well attended by 75 members and supporters. The board thanked Laraine Turk for her four productive years as President. Crediting her for much accomplished under her gifted leadership. Fortunately she's not leaving us and will remain on the Board. I have now stepped into the President's position and will endeavor to keep the Association on the firm footing Laraine has left it and will give my best to nurture MBCA's continued good service to the Morongo Basin.

Other Board news: Esther Shaw was thanked for her service as she stepped off the board. Marina Dee West and Steve Bardwell not only

accepted nominations to the board, but both have also agreed to take on officer's positions. Marina will assume the Recording Secretary's role. Steve will take on the Treasurer's as Ruth Rieman passes the torch after four years capably managing MBCA's finances. We are endowed with a board of impressive and dedicated movers and shakers who are committed to our mission of protecting the quality of life in our rural desert communities. It's a genuine pleasure to work with them and I look forward to our year ahead.

The annual meeting's Keynote speaker was Angelina Galiteva, member of the Governor's CAL-ISO (CA Independent Systems Operators) board and former chair of the World Council on Renewable Energy. Angelina highlighted key developments in technology that should make it easier to draw more power from renewable sources to control our energy destiny. It was a powerful and dynamic presentation that energized the audience with her expertise and vision for the future.

Local speakers April Sall, Director of Conservation of the Wildlands Conservancy updated us on the status of the DRECP and expressed ongoing concerns for the identification and protection of conservation sensitive lands. The "wildcard" being that several of DRECP's optional scenarios include "variance lands" that leave open the possibility of their development for renewable energy projects. The final draft of the DRECP is now scheduled for distribution in the spring or later.

Marina West, Executive Director of the Bighorn Water District addressed the status of the Ames Basin Water Recharge project and also revealed an eye-opening assessment of the extent that solar energy projects use water during construction.

MBCA's accomplishments over the past year were reviewed and goals for 2014 outlined. We will continue the Desert-Wise Living Series, the Invasives program and Hold the Mustard campaign, and sponsorship of a stretch of highway 62 "adopted" by the MBCA Clean n' Green Team. Plans are underway for MBCA to pursue IRS 501(c)3 non-profit status which will widen opportunities for fund-raising in support of our educational & outreach programs. The board will look for ways to connect conservation with economic interests in the Basin.

4. MBCA OUTREACH PROGRAM

Invasives Lecture / Pull-the-Mustard / Clean n' Green Team

The MBCA invasive plants campaign and Pull-the-Mustard efforts continued on February 11th with Josh Hoines, Joshua Tree National Park's vegetation specialist's lecture *Weeds versus Wildflowers: A Race*

for Resources. This was the second MBCA sponsored event this year with 42 people attending. Thanks to Josh for his lively & informative presentation, Stefanie Ritter and Hi-Desert Nature Museum for providing their facility and Deb Bollinger for coordinating the event.

Thanks for your continuing interest and support.

Sarah Kennington, President

Your 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

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